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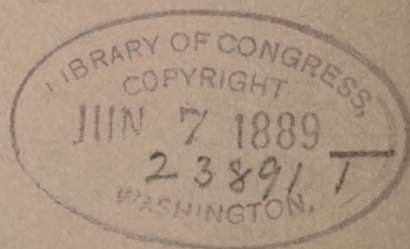
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WILDS OF NEW MEXICO

BY

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G. M. FENN.
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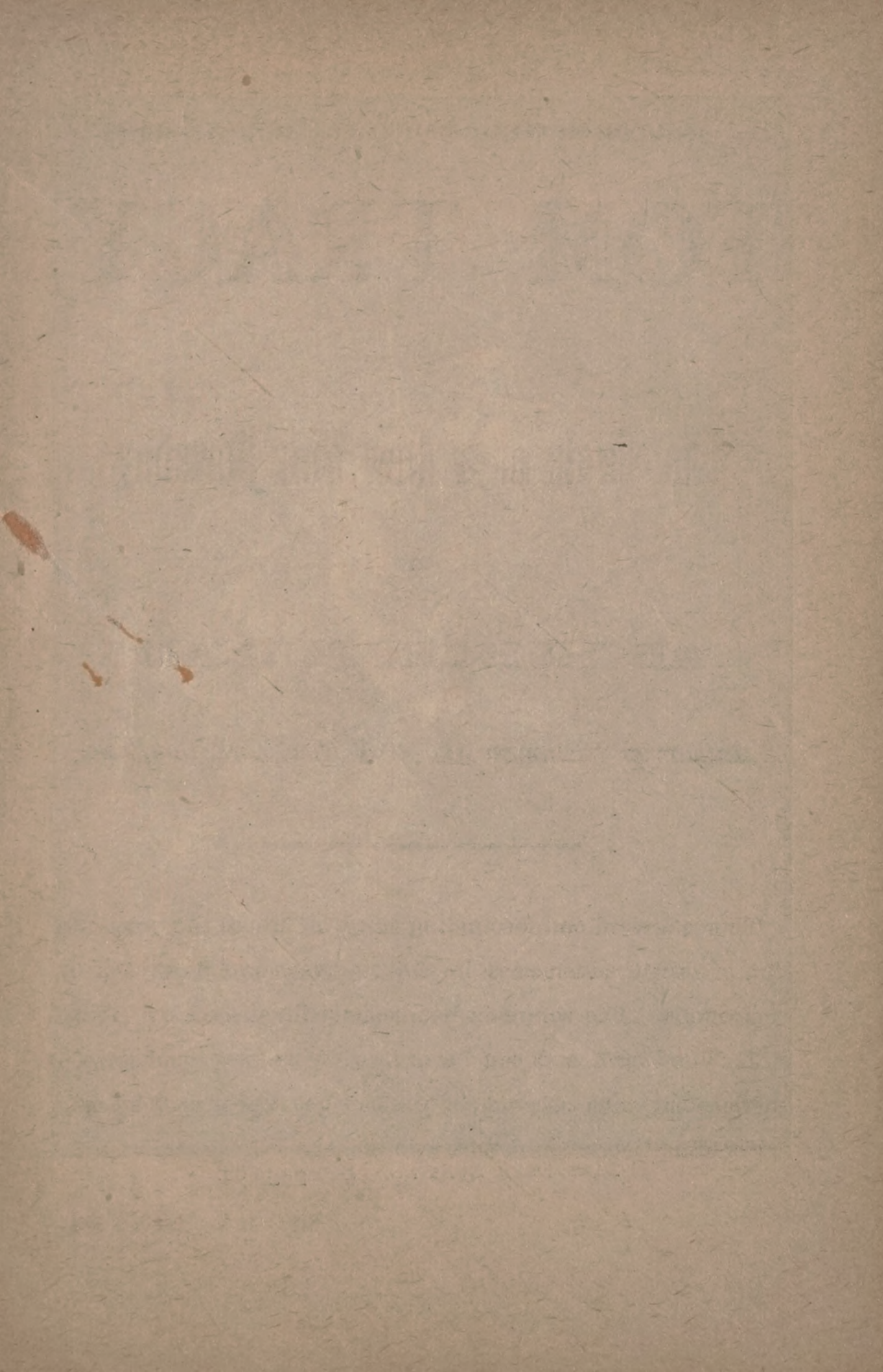
NEW YORK:

FRANK A. MUNSEY, PUBLISHER.

1888.
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BART DEER HUNTING. - - See page 63,

IN THE WILDS OF NEW MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

THEY DECIDE TO RUN THE RISK.

"WELL, Joses," said Dr. Lascelles, "if you feel afraid, you had better go back to the city."

A deep silence ensued, and the little party grouped about between a small umbrella shaped tent and the dying embers of the fire, at which a meal of savory antelope steak had lately been cooked, carefully avoided glancing one at the other.

Just inside the entrance to the tent a pretty, slight made girl of about seventeen was seated, busily plying her needle in the repair of some rents in a pair of ornamented loose leather leggins that had evidently been making acquaintance with some of the thorns of this rugged land. She was very simply dressed, and, though wearing the high comb and veil of a Spanish woman, her complexion, tanned as it was, and features suggested that she might have been from New England, as did also the speech of the fine athletic middle aged man who had just been speaking.

His appearance was decidedly Spanish, for he wore the short jacket with embroidered sleeves, tight trousers—made very wide about the leg and ankle—sash, and broad sombrero of the Mexican Spaniard.

The man addressed was a swarthy looking half breed, who lay upon the parched earth, his brow rugged, his eyes half closed, and lips pouted out in a surly, resentful way, as if he was just about to speak and say something ugly.

Three more men of a similar type were lying beside and behind, all smoking cigarettes, which from time to time they softly rolled up and lighted with a brand at the fire, as they listened to the conversation between the bronzed New Englander and him who had been addressed as Joses.

They were all half breeds, and, like the first speaker, were dressed as Spaniards, each also wearing a handkerchief of bright color tied round his head and beneath his soft hat.

There was another present, however, also an anxious watcher of the scene, and that was a well built youth of about the same age as the girl.

His appearance was different from that of his companions, for he wore a closely fitting tunic and loose breeches of what at the first glance seemed to be tan colored velvet, but a second look showed to be very soft, well prepared deerskin; stout gaiters of a hard leather protected his legs; a belt, looped so as to form a cartridge holder, and a natty little felt hat, completed his costume.

"Well," said the speaker, after a long pause, "you do not speak; I say, are you afraid?"

"I dunno, boss," said the man addressed. "I don't feel afraid now, but if a lot of Injuns come whooping and swooping down upon us full gallop, I dessay I should feel a bit queer."

There was a growl of acquiescence here from the other men, and the first speaker went on.

"Well," he said, "let us understand our position at once. I would rather go on alone than with men I could not trust."

"Always did trust us, boss," said the man, surlily.

"Allays," said the one nearest to him, a swarthier, more surly, and fiercer looking fellow than his companion.

"I always did, Joses; I always did, Juan; and you too, Harry and Sam," said the first speaker. "I was always proud of the way in which my ranch was protected and my cattle cared for."

"We could not help the Injuns stampeding the lot, boss, time after time."

"And ruining me at last, my lads? No; it was no fault of yours. I suppose it was my own."

"No, boss, it was settling so close to the hunting grounds, and the Injuns being so near."

"Ah, well, we need not consider how all that came to pass, my lads; we know they ruined me."

"And you never killed one o' them for it, boss," growled Joses.

"Nor wished to, my lad. They did not take our lives."

"But they would if they could have broken in and burnt us out, boss," growled Joses.

"Perhaps so; well, let us understand one another, Are you afraid?"

"Suppose we all are, boss," said the man,

"And you want to go back?"

"No, not one of us."

Here there was a growl of satisfaction.

"But you object to going forward, my men?"

"Well, you see it's like this, boss; the boys here all want to work for you, and young Master Bart, and Miss Maudie there; but they think you ought to go where it's safe, and not where we're 'most sure to be tortured and scalped. There's lots o' places where the whites are in plenty."

"And where every gully and mountain has been ransacked for metals, my lad. I want to go where

white men have never been before, and search the mountains there."

"For gold and silver and that sort of thing, boss?"

"Yes, my lads."

"All right, boss; then we suppose you must go."

"And you will go back because it is dangerous?"

"I never said such a word, boss. I only said it warn't safe."

"And for answer to that, Joses, I say that, danger or no danger, I must try and make up for my past losses by some good venture in one of these unknown regions. Now, then, have you made up your minds? If not, make them up quickly, and let me know what you mean to do."

Joses did not turn round to his companions, whose spokesman he was, but said quietly, as he rolled up a fresh cigarette:

"Mind's made up, boss."

"And you will go back?"

"Yes, boss."

"All of you?"

"All of us," said Joses, slowly. "When you do," he added, after a pause.

"I knew he would say that, sir," cried the youth, who had been looking on and listening attentively; "I knew Joses would not leave us, nor any of the others."

"Stop a moment," interposed the first speaker. "What about your companions, my lad?"

"What, them?" said Joses, quietly. "Why, they do as I do."

"Are you sure?"

"Course I am, boss. They told me what to do."

"Then thank you, my lads. I felt and knew I could trust you. Believe me, I will take you into no greater danger than I can help; but we must be a

little venturesome in penetrating into new lands, and the Indians may not prove our enemies after all."

"Ha, ha, ha! haw, haw, haw!" laughed Joses, hoarsely. "You wait and see, boss. They stampeded your cattle when you had any. Now look out, or they'll stampede you."

"Well, we'll risk it," said the other. "Now let's be ready for any danger that comes. Saddle the horses, and tether them close to the wagon. I will have the first watch tonight; you take the second, Joses; and you, Bart, take the third. Get to sleep early, my lads, for I want to be off before sunrise in the morning."

The men nodded their willingness to obey orders, and soon after all were hushed in sleep, the ever wakeful stars only looking down upon one erect figure, and that was the form of Dr. Lascelles, as he stood near the faintly glowing fire, leaning upon his rifle, and listening intently for the faintest sound of danger.

As the doctor stood watching there, his thoughts naturally went back to the events of the past day, the sixth since they had bidden good by to civilization and started upon their expedition. He thought of the remonstrance offered by his men to their proceeding farther; then of the satisfactory way in which the difficulty had been settled; and later on of the troubles brought up by his man's remarks. He recalled the weary years he had spent upon his cattle farm, in which he had invested after the death of his wife in New England; how he had come out to New Mexico, and settled down to form a cattle breeding establishment, with his young daughter Maude for companion.

Then he thought how everything had gone wrong, not only with him, but with his neighbors, one of

the nearest being killed by an onslaught of a savage tribe of Indians, the news being brought to him by the son of the slaughtered man. The result had been that the doctor had determined to flee at once; but the day was put off, and as no more troubles presented themselves just then, he once more settled down.

Young Bart Woodlaw, the murdered ranchman's boy, became by degrees almost as it were a son to the doctor, and the fight was continued till herd after herd had been swept away by the Indians; and at last Dr. Lascelles, the clever physician who had wearied of his lonely home and his practice after his terrible loss, and who had come out West to seek rest and make money for his child, found himself next to a beggar and obliged to begin life again.

Earlier in life he had been a great lover of geology, and was something of a mineralogist; and though he had of late devoted himself to the wild, rough life of a Western cattle rancher, he had now and then spent a few hours in exploring the mountainous parts of the country near; so that when he had once more to look the world in the face and decide whether he should settle down as some more successful cattle breeder's foreman, the idea occurred to him that his knowledge of geology might prove useful in this painful strait.

He jumped at the idea.

"Of course; why not? Scores of men had made discoveries of gold, silver, and other valuable metals, and the result had been fortunes. Why should not he do something of the kind?"

He mentioned the idea to Bartholomew Woodlaw, who jumped at the prospect, but looked grave directly after.

"I should like it, Mr. Lascelles," he said, "but there is Maud."

"What of her?" said the doctor.

"How could we take her into the wilds?"

"It would be safer to take her into the deserts and mountains than to leave her here," said the doctor, bitterly. "I should at least always have her under my eye."

He went out and told his men, who were hanging about the old ranch, although there was no work for them to do.

One minute they were looking dull and gloomy, the next they were waving their hats and blankets in the air, and the result of it all was that in less than a month Dr. Lascelles had stored a wagon with the wreck of his fortune, purchased a small tent for his daughter's use, and, all well armed, the little party had started off into the wilds of New Mexico, bound for the mountain region, where the doctor hoped to make some discovery of mineral treasure sufficient to recompense him for all his risk, as well as for the losses of the past.

They were, then, six days out when there was what had seemed to be a sort of mutiny among his men—a trouble that he was in the act of quelling when we made his acquaintance in the last chapter—though, as we have seen, it proved to be no mutiny at all, but merely a remonstrance, on the part of the rough, honest fellows who had decided to share his fortunes, against running into what they esteemed to be unnecessary risks.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST APACHES.

EVENING was closing in, and the ruddy horizontal rays of the sun were casting long, grotesque shadows of the tall cactus plants, when a body of Indians, about a hundred strong, rode over the plain towards the rocks where Dr. Lascelles and his little party were encamped.

The appearance of the Indians denoted that they were on the war path. Each wore a rude tiara of feathers around his head, beneath which hung his long black hair; and, saving their fringed and ornamented leggins, the men rode for the most part naked, and with their breasts and arms painted in a coarse and extravagant style.

All were fully armed, some carrying rifles, others bows and arrows, while a few bore spears, from the top of whose shafts below the blades hung tufts of feathers.

The rugged nature of the ground separated the party of Indians from the doctor's little camp, so that the approach of the war party was quite unobserved, and apparently, from their movements, they were equally unaware of the presence of a camp of the hated whites so near at hand.

They were very quiet, riding slowly and in regular order, as if moved by one impulse; and when the foremost men halted, all drew rein by some tolerably verdant patches of the plain, blankets and robes

were unstrapped, and the horses allowed to graze. In an incredibly short time the band had half a dozen fires burning of wood that had been hastily collected, and they were ravenously devouring the strips of dried buffalo meat that had been hanging all day in the hot sun, to be peppered with dust from the plain.

This, however, did not trouble the savages, whom one learned in the lore of the plains would have immediately set down as belonging to a powerful tribe of horse Indians—the Apaches, well known for their prowess in war and their skill as wild horsemen of the plains. They feasted on, like men whose appetites had become furious from long fasting, until at last they had satisfied their hunger, and the evening shadows were making the great plants of cactus stand up, weird and strange, against the fast darkening evening sky; then, while the embers of the fire grew more ruddy and bright, each Indian, save those deputed to look after the horses and keep on the watch for danger, drew his blanket or buffalo robe over his naked shoulders, filled and lit his long pipe, and began silently and thoughtfully to smoke.

Meanwhile, in utter unconsciousness of the nearness of danger, Dr. Lascelles continued his watch thus far into the night. From time to time he examined the tethering of the horses, and glanced inside the tent to stand and listen to the regular low breathing of his child, and then walk to where, rolled in his blanket, Bart Woodlaw lay sleeping in full confidence that a good watch was being kept over the camp as he slept.

Away towards the open plains it was clear and transparent, but towards the rocks that stretched there on one side all seemed black. Not a sound fell upon the doctor's ear, and so great was the still-

ness that the dull crackle of a piece of smoldering wood sounded painfully loud and strange.

At last the time had come for arousing some one to take his place, and walking, after a few moments' thought, to where Bart lay, he bent down and touched him lightly on the arm.

In an instant, rifle in hand, the lad was upon his feet.

"Is there danger?" he said, in a low, quiet whisper.

"I hope not, Bart," said the doctor, quietly; "everything is perfectly still. I shall lie down in front of the tent; wake me if you hear a sound."

The lad nodded, and then stood trying to shake off the drowsiness that still remained after his deep sleep while he watched the doctor's figure grow indistinct as he walked towards the dimly seen tent. He could just make out that the doctor bent down, and then he seemed to disappear.

Bart had been watching the stars for about an hour, staring at the distant plain, and trying to make out what was the real shape of a pile of rock that sheltered them on the north, and which seemed to stand out peculiarly clear against the dark sky, when, turning sharply, he brought his rifle to the ready, and stood, with beating heart, staring at a tall dark figure a dozen yards away.

It was so dark that he could make out nothing more, only that it was a man, and that he did not move.

Bart's first idea was that this must be an enemy, and that he ought to fire. If an enemy, it must be an Indian; but then it did not look like an Indian; and Bart knew that it was his duty to walk boldly up to the figure, and see what the danger was; and in this spirit he took one step forward, and then stopped, for it was not an easy thing to do.

At last he mastered himself, and, with rifle held ready, walked boldly towards the figure, believing that it was some specimen of the fleshy growth of the region to which the darkness had added a weirdness all its own.

No. It was a man undoubtedly, and as, nerving himself more and more, Bart walked close up, the figure turned and said slowly:

"I can't quite make that out, Master Bart."

"You, Joses!" exclaimed Bart, whose heart seemed to give a bound of delight.

"Yes, sir, I thought I'd get up and watch for a bit, and just as I looked round before coming to you, that rock took my fancy."

"Yes, it does look quaint and strange," said Bart; "I had been watching it."

"Yes, but why do it look quaint and strange?" said Joses, in a low, quiet whisper, speaking as if a dozen savages were at his elbow.

"Because we can see it against the sky," replied Bart, who felt half amused at the importance placed by his companion upon such a trifle.

"And why can you see it against the sky?" said Joses again. "Strikes me there's a fire over yonder."

Bart was about to exclaim, "What nonsense!" but he recalled the times when out hunting up stray cattle Joses had displayed a perception that had seemed almost marvelous, and so he held his tongue.

"I'll take a turn out yonder, my lad," he said, quietly; "I won't be very long."

"Shall I wake up the doctor?"

"No, not yet. Let him get a good rest," replied Joses. "Perhaps it's nothing to mind; but coming out here we must be always ready to find danger, and danger must find us on the lookout."

"I'll go with you," said Bart, eagerly.

"No, that won't do," said the rough fellow sturdily. "You've got to keep watch like they tell me the sailors do out at sea. Who's to take care of the camp if you go away?"

"I'll stay then," said Bart, with a sigh of dissatisfaction, and the next moment he was alone. For Jose had thrown down his blanket, and laid his rifle upon it carefully, while over the lock he had placed his broad Spanish hat to keep off the moisture of the night air. Then he had gone silently off at a trot over the short and scrubby growth near at hand.

The rough cattle driver and plainsman continued his trot till the broken nature of the ground compelled him to proceed cautiously, threading his way in and out amongst the masses of rock, and forcing him to make a considerable detour before he passed the ridge of stone.

His first act was to drop down on hands and knees, his next to lie flat and drag himself slowly forward a couple of hundred yards, and then stop.

It was quite time that he did, for on either hand, as well as in front, lay groups of Indians, while just beyond he could distinguish the horses calmly cropping the grass and other herbage near. So still was it, and so closely had he approached, that every mouthful seized by the horses sounded quite plainly upon his ear, while more than once came the mutterings of some heavy sleeper, with an occasional hasty movement on the part of some one who was restless.

Jose had found out all he wanted, and the next thing was to get back and give the alarm. But, as is often the case in such matters, it was easier to come than to return. It had to be done, though, for the position of those in the little camp was one

full of peril, and, turning softly, he had begun his retrograde movement, when a figure he had not seen suddenly uttered an impatient "Ugh!" and started to his feet.

Joses's hand went to his belt and grasped his knife, but that was all. It was not the time for taking to headlong flight, an act which would have brought the whole band whooping and yelling at his heels.

Fortunately for the spy in the Indian camp, the night was darker now, a thin veil of cloud having swept over the stars; otherwise the fate of Dr. Lascelles's expedition would have been sealed. As it was, the Indian kicked the form beside him heavily with his moccasined foot, and then walked slowly away in the direction of the horses.

Some men would have continued their retreat at once, perhaps hurriedly, but Joses was too old a campaigner for such an act. As he lay there with his face buried deeply in the short herbage, he thought to himself that most probably the waking up of the Indian who had just gone, the kick, and the striding away, would have aroused some of the others, and in this belief he lay perfectly still for quite ten minutes.

Then, feeling satisfied that he might continue his retreat, he was drawing himself together for a fresh start, when a man on his right leaped to his feet, another did the same, and after talking together for a few moments, they, too, went off in the direction of the horses.

This decided Joses upon a fresh wait, which he kept up till feeling that, safe or unsafe, he must make the venture, he once more started, crawling slowly along without making a sound, till he felt it safe to rise to his hands and knees, when he got over the ground far more swiftly, ending by spring-

ing to his feet, and listening intently for a few moments, when there was the faint neigh of a horse from the Indian camp.

“If one of ours hears that,” muttered Joses, “he’ll answer, and the Indians will be down upon us before we know where we are.”

CHAPTER III.

SURROUNDED BY INDIANS.

BART WOODLAW had not been keeping his renewed watch long before he heard a step behind him, and, turning sharply, found himself face to face with Dr. Lascelles.

"Well, my boy," he said, "is all right?"

"I think so, sir. Did you hear anything?"

"No, my boy; I woke up and just came to see how matters were going. Any alarm?"

"Yes, sir, and no, sir," replied Bart.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the doctor, sharply.

"Only that Joses woke up, sir, and I found him watching that mass of rock which you can see out yonder. That one, sir—no!—I can't see it now."

"Why," said the doctor, in a quick, low, decisive tone; "is it darker now?"

"Very little, sir; but perhaps Joses was right; he said he thought there must be a fire out there to make it stand out so clearly, and——"

"Well, speak, my boy! Be quick!"

"Perhaps he was right, sir, but I cannot see the rock there at all."

"Where is Joses? Why did he not go and see?" exclaimed the doctor sharply.

"He has been gone nearly an hour, sir, and I was expecting him back when you came."

"That's right! But which way? Joses must

feel that there is danger, or he would not have left the camp like this."

Bart pointed in the direction taken by their follower, and the doctor took a few hasty strides forward, as if to follow, but he came back directly.

"No. It would be folly," he said; "I should not find him out in this wild. Depend upon it, Bart, that was an Indian fire and camp out beyond the ridge yonder, and he suspected it. These old plainsmen read every sign of earth and sky, and we must learn to do the same, boy, for it may mean the saving of our lives."

"I'll try it," said Bart, earnestly. "I can follow a trail a little now."

"Yes, and your eyes are wonderfully keen," replied the doctor. "You have all the acute sense of one of these hunters, but you want the power of applying what you see, and learning its meaning."

Bart was about to reply, but the doctor began walking up and down impatiently, for being more used than his ward in the ways of the plains, he could not help feeling sure that there was danger, and this idea grew upon him to such an extent that at last he roused the men from their sleep, bidding them silently get the horses ready for an immediate start, should it be necessary; and while this was going on he went into the tent.

"Maude—my child—quick!" he said, quietly. "Don't be alarmed, but wake up, and be ready for a long ride before dawn."

Maude was well accustomed to obey promptly all her father's orders, and so used to the emergencies and perils of frontier life, that she said nothing, but rapidly prepared for their start, and in a few minutes she was ready with all her little traveling possessions in the saddle bags and valise that were strapped to her horse.

Just as the doctor had seen that all was nearly ready, and that scarcely anything more remained to be done than to strike the little tent, Joses came running up.

"Well! what news?" said the doctor, hurriedly.

"Injuns—hundreds—mile away," said the plainsman, in quick, sharp tones. "Hah! good!" he added, as he saw the preparations that had been made.

"Bart, see to Maude's horse. Down with the tent, Joses; Harry, help him. You, Juan and Sam, see to the horses."

Every order was obeyed with the promptitude displayed in men accustomed to a life on the plains, and in a very few minutes the tent was down, rolled up, and on the side of the wagon, the steeds were ready, and all mounting save Juan, who took his place in front of the wagon to drive its two horses, Dr. Lascelles gave the word. Joses went to the front to act as pioneer, and pick a way unincumbered with stones, so that the wagon might go on in safety, and the camp was left behind.

Everything depended now upon silence. A shrill neigh from a mare would have betrayed them; even the louder rattle of the wagon wheels might have had that result, and brought upon them the marauding party, with a result that the doctor shuddered to contemplate.

There were moments when, in the face of such a danger, he felt disposed to make his way back to civilization, dreading now to take his child out with him into the wilderness. But there was something so tempting in the freedom of the life; he felt so sanguine of turning his knowledge of mineralogy to some account; and what was more, it seemed so cowardly to turn back now, that he decided to go forward and risk all.

"We always have our rifles," he said, softly, to himself; "and if we can use them well, we may force the Indians to respect us."

They were journeying nearly due north, and so far they had got on quite a couple of miles without a horse uttering its shrill neigh. It was possible now, silent as was the night, their cry might not reach the keen ears of their enemies; but all the same, the party proceeded as cautiously as possible, and, beyond an order now and then given in a low voice, there was not a word uttered.

It was hard work, too; for, proceeding as they were in comparative darkness, every now and then a horse would place its foot in the burrow of some animal, and nearly fall headlong. Then, too, in spite of all care and pioneering, a wheel of the wagon would sink into some hollow or be brought heavily against the side of a rock.

Sometimes they had to alter their direction to avoid rapidly rising ground, and these obstacles became so many, that towards morning they came to a halt, regularly puzzled, and not knowing whether they were journeying away from or towards their enemies.

A couple of dreary hours ensued, during which they could do nothing but wait for daybreak, which, when it came at last, seemed cold and black and dreary.

A good breakfast and a few hours' rest seemed to put a different aspect upon the face of affairs; the day was glorious, and though the region they were in was arid and wanting in water, there was plenty to interest any one traveling on an expedition of research. A good lookout was kept for Indians, but Dr. Lascelles determined, if he could find a spring anywhere at hand, to stay where he was for a couple of days.

"You see, Bart," he said, as they hunted about among the craggiest part of the amphitheater where fortune or misfortune had led them, "it does not much matter where we go, so long as it is into a region where prospectors have not penetrated before. Many of these hills are teeming with mineral treasures, and we must come upon some of Nature's wasting store if we persevere."

"Then we might find metals here, sir?" said Bart, eagerly.

"As likely here as anywhere else. These rocks are partly quartz, and at any time we may come upon some of the stone veined with gold, or stumble upon a place where silver lies."

"I hope," laughed Bart, "when we do, I may stumble right over one of the blocks, and so be sure of examining it. I think I should know silver if I found it."

"I am not so sure," said the doctor. "You've led a life of a kind that has not made you very likely to understand minerals, but I dare say we shall both know a little more about them before we have done—that is," he added, with a sigh, "if the Indians will leave us alone."

"We must give them the slip, sir," said Bart, laughing.

"Perhaps we may, my boy; but we have another difficulty to contend with."

"What's that, sir; the distance?"

"No, Bart; I'm uneasy about the men. I'm afraid they'll strike sooner or later, and insist upon going back."

"I'm not, sir," replied Bart. "I will answer for Joses, and he has only to say he means to go forward and the others will then keep by his side."

"That settles me upon going forward this evening," said the doctor, "for water seems to be very

scarce. We must try and strike the river higher up, and follow its course. We shall then have plenty of water always within reach, and find wood and trees and hiding places."

"But I thought you wanted to get into a mountainous part, sir, where precious minerals would be found," said Bart.

"Exactly, my dear boy, and that is just the place we shall reach if we persevere, for it is up in these rocky fastnesses, where the rivers have their sources, that sometimes their beds are sprinkled with the specks, and also with pieces of gold that have been washed out of the sides of the mighty hills."

They went on thoughtfully for a time, till they were close upon the little camp.

When they were just about to turn into the narrow opening where the wagon lay and the horses were tethered, the doctor stooped down to examine some fragments that lay loose about their feet, and the consequence was that Bart went on alone.

He was just about to give a peculiar whistle, one used commonly by himself and the men when they wished to signal their whereabouts, when he stopped short. An alarming spectacle was before him. He raised his rifle to his shoulder, and stood ready to fire, while his face, tanned as it was by the sun, turned of a sickly hue.

For a moment he was about to fire. Then he felt that he must rush forward and save Maude. The next moment calmer reflection told him that such help and strength as he could command would be needed, and, slipping back out of sight, he ran to where he had left the doctor.

He found him sitting down examining, by means of a little magnifying glass, one of the fragments of rock that he had chipped off, while his rifle lay across his knee.

He seemed so calm and content that in those moments of emergency Bart almost shrank from speaking, knowing, as he did, how terrible would be the effect of his words.

Just then the doctor looked up, saw his strange gaze, and, dropping the fragments, he leaped to his feet.

"What is it?" he cried; "what is wrong?" and as he spoke the lock of his double rifle gave forth two ominous clicks twice over.

"They have come round while we have been away," whispered Bart, hoarsely.

"They? Who? Our men?"

"No," panted Bart; "the camp is surrounded by Indians!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SURGICAL OPERATION.

DR. LASCELLES ran swiftly towards the wagon, with Bart close upon his heels.

The full extent of their peril was at once apparent, no less than twelve mounted Indians being at the head of the little valley in a group, every man in full war paint, and with his rifle across his knees as he sat upon his sturdy Indian pony.

Facing them were Maude, Joses, Juan and the other two men, who had apparently been taken by surprise, and who, rifle in hand, seemed to be parleying with the enemy.

The sight of the reinforcement in the shape of Bart and Dr. Lascelles made the Indians utter a loud "Ugh!" and for a moment they seemed disposed to assume the offensive, but to Bart's surprise they only urged their ponies forward a few yards, and then stopped.

"Get behind the wagon quick, my child," panted the doctor, as Bart rushed up to his old companion's side.

"They came down upon us all at once, boss," said Joses. "They didn't come along the trail."

"Show a bold front," exclaimed the doctor; "we may beat them off."

To his surprise, however, the Indians did not seem to mean fighting, one of them, who appeared to be the chief, riding forward a few yards, and saying something in his own language.

"What does he say?" said the doctor, impatiently.

"I can't make him out," replied Josés. "His is a strange tongue to me."

"He is hurt," exclaimed Bart. "He is wounded in the arm. I think he is asking for something."

It certainly had that appearance, for the Indian was holding rifle and reins in his left hand, while the right arm hung helplessly by his side.

This was no time for hesitating, and as it seemed to be as Bart had intimated the doctor risked this being a maneuver on the part of the Indian chief. Holding his rifle ready, he stepped boldly forward to where the dusky warrior sat calm and motionless upon his horse.

Upon going close up, there was no longer any room for doubt. The chief's arm was roughly bandaged, and the coarse cloth seemed to be eating into the terribly swollen flesh.

That was enough. All the doctor's old instincts came at once to the front, and he took the injured limb in his hand. He must have caused the Indian intense pain, but the fine bronzed looking fellow, who had features of a keen aquiline type, did not move a muscle, while, as the doctor laid his rifle up against a rock, the little mounted band uttered in chorus a sort of grunt of approval.

"It is peace, Bart," said the doctor. "Maude, my child, get a bowl of clean water, towels and some bandages. Bart, get out my surgical case."

As he spoke, he motioned to the chief to dismount, which he did, throwing himself lightly from his pony, the well trained animal standing motionless, and bending down its head to crop the nearest herbage.

"Throw a blanket down upon that sage brush, Josés," continued the doctor; and this being done, the latter pointed to it, making signs that the chief should sit down.

He did not stir for a few moments, but gazed searchingly round at the group, till he saw Maude come forward with a tin bowl of clean water and the bandages, followed by Bart, who had in his hand a little surgical case. Then he took a few steps forward, laying his rifle down amongst the short shrubby growth, while Juan, Sam, and Harry on the one side, and mounted Indians upon the other, looked curiously on.

Once there was a low murmur among the latter as the doctor drew a keen, long knife from its sheath at his belt ; but the chief did not wince, and all were once more still.

"He has been badly hurt in a fight," said the doctor, "and the rough surgery of his tribe or his medicine man does not act."

"That's it, boss," said Joses, who was standing close by with rifle ready in case of treachery. "His medicine man couldn't tackle that, and they think all white men are good doctors. It means peace."

"I think so," replied the doctor. "Yes ; these Indians are friendly, but we must be on our guard. Don't show that we are suspicious though. Help me as I dress this arm. Maude, my child, you had better go into the wagon."

"I am not afraid, father," she said quietly.

"Stay, then," he said ; "you can be of use, perhaps."

He spoke like this, for, in their rough frontier life, the girl had had more than one experience of surgery. Men had been wounded in fights with the Indians ; others had suffered from falls and trampings from horses, while on more than one occasion the doctor had had to deal with terrible injuries, the results of gorings from fierce bulls.

Meanwhile the rest of the band leaped lightly from their ponies, and, paying not the slightest heed to the

white party, proceeded to gather wood and brush to make themselves a fire, some unpacking buffalo meat, and one bringing forward a portion of a pronghorn antelope.

The doctor was now busily examining his patient's arm, cutting away the rough bandages, and laying bare a terrible injury.

He was not long in seeing its extent, and he knew that if some necessary steps were not taken at once, mortification of the limb would set in and the result would be death.

The Indian's eyes glittered as he keenly watched the doctor's face. He evidently knew the worst, and it was this which had made him seek white help, though of course he was not aware how fortunate he had been in his haphazard choice. He must have been suffering intense pain, but not a nerve quivered, not a muscle moved, while, deeply interested, Joses came closer, rested his arm upon the top of his rifle and looked down.

"Why, he's got an arrow run right up his arm all along by the bone, boss," exclaimed the frontiersman; "and he has been trying to pull it out and it's broken in."

"Right, Joses," said the doctor, quietly; "and worse than that, the head of the arrow is fixed in the bone."

"Ah, I couldn't tell that," said Joses coolly.

"I wish I could speak his dialect," continued the doctor. "I shall have to operate severely if his arm is to be saved, and I don't want him or his men to pay me my fee with a crack from a tomahawk. Maude, my child, I think you had better go."

"If you wish it father, I will," she replied simply; "but I could help you, and I should not be in the least afraid."

"Good," said the doctor, laconically, as he lowered

the injured arm after bathing it free from the macerated leaves and bark with which it had been bound up. Then, with the Indian's glittering eyes following every movement, he took from a leather case of surgical instruments, all still wonderfully bright and kept in a most perfect state, a curious looking pair of forceps, with rough handles and a couple of short bladed, very keen knives.

"Now I must try and make him understand what I want to do. Give me that piece of stick, Bart, it will do to imitate the arrow."

Bart handed the piece of wood, which the doctor shortened, and then, suiting the action to his words, he spoke to the chief.

"The arrow entered here," he said, pointing to a wound a little above the Indian's wrist, "and pierced right up through the muscles, to bury itself in the bone just here."

As he spoke, he pushed the stick up outside the arm along the course that the arrow had taken, and holding the end about where he considered the head of the arrow to be.

For answer the Indian gave two sharp nods, and said something in his own tongue which no one understood.

"Then," continued the doctor, "you or somebody else, in trying to extract the arrow, have broken it off and it is here in the arm, at least six inches and the head."

As he spoke, he now broke the stick in two, throwing away part, and holding the remainder up against the Indian's wounded arm.

Again the chief nodded, and this time he smiled.

The doctor then glanced at his savage patient, and laying one hand upon the dreadfully swollen limb, he received a nod of encouragement, for there was no sign of quailing in the chief's eyes ; but as the

doctor approached the point of the knife to a spot terribly discolored, just below the elbow, the Indian made a sound full of remonstrance, and pointing to the wound above the wrist, signed to his attendant that he should slit the arm right up.

"No, no," said the doctor, smiling. "I'm not going to make a terrible wound like that. Leave it to me."

He patted the chief on the shoulder as he spoke, and once more the Indian subsided into a state of stolidity, as if there were nothing the matter and he was not in the slightest pain.

There was no hesitation. With one quick, firm cut, the doctor divided the flesh, piercing deep down, and as he cut, his knife gave a sharp grate.

"Right on the arrow head, Bart," he said, quietly ; and, withdrawing his knife, he thrust a pair of sharp forceps into the wound, and seemed as if he were going to drag out the arrow, but it was only to divide the shaft. This he seized with the other forceps, and drew out of the bleeding opening—a piece nearly five inches long, which came away easily enough.

Then, without a moment's hesitation, he sponged the cut for a while, and directly after, guiding them with the index finger of his left hand, he thrust the forceps once more into the wound.

There was a slight grating noise once again, a noise that Bart, as he manfully held the arm, seemed to feel go right through every nerve with a peculiar thrill. Then it was evident that the doctor had fast hold of the arrow head, and he drew hard to take it out.

"I thought so," he said, "it is driven firmly into the bone."

As he spoke, he worked his forceps slightly to and fro, to loosen the arrow head, and then, bearing firmly

upon it, drew it out—an ugly piece of barbed iron, with a scrap of the shaft and some deer sinew attached.

The Indian did not move or speak, but sat patiently till the deep cut was sewn up, padded with lint, and bound, and the wound above the wrist, where the arrow had entered, was also dressed and bound up carefully.

“There ; now your arm will heal,” said the doctor, as he contrived a sling, and placed the injured limb at rest. “A man with such a fine healthy physique will not suffer much, I’ll be bound. Hah, it’s quite a treat to do some of the old work again.”

The chief waited patiently until the doctor had finished, Then rising, he stood for a few moments with knitted brows, perfectly motionless ; and the frontiersman, seeing what was the matter, seemed to be about to proffer his arm, but the Indian paid no heed to him, merely gazing straight before him till the feeling of faintness had passed away, when he stooped and picked up the piece of arrow shaft and the head, walked with them to where his followers were sitting, and held them out for them to see. Then they were passed round with a series of grunts, duly examined, and finally found a resting place in a little beaver skin bag at the chief’s girdle, along with his paints and one or two pieces of so called “medicine” or charms.

Meanwhile the doctor was busy putting away his instruments, feeling greatly relieved that the encounter with the Indians had been of so friendly a nature.

At the end of a few minutes the chief came back with the large buffalo robe that had been strapped to the back of his pony, spread it before the doctor, placed on it his rifle, tomahawk, knife, and pouch, and signed to him that they were his as a present,

"He means that it is all he has to give you, sir," said Bart, who seemed to understand the chief's ways quicker than his guardian, and who eagerly set himself to interpret

"Yes, that seems to be his meaning," replied the doctor. "Well, let's see if we can't make him our friend."

Saying which the doctor stooped down, picked up the knife and hatchet, and placed them in the chief's belt, his rifle in the hollow of his arm, and finally his buffalo robe over his shoulders, ending by giving him his hand smilingly, and saying the one word *friend*, *friend*, two or three times over.

The chief made no reply, but gravely stalked back to his followers as if affronted at the refusal of his gift, and the day passed with him lying down quietly smoking in the sage brush, while the occupants of the doctor's little camp went uneasily about their various tasks, ending by dividing the night into watches, lest their savage neighbors should take it into their heads to depart suddenly with the white man's horses—a favorite practice with Indians, and one that in this case would have been destructive of the expedition.

CHAPTER V.

A NEW ALARM.

To the surprise and satisfaction of Bart, all was well in the camp at daybreak when he looked round; the horses were grazing contentedly at the end of their tether ropes, and the Indians were just stirring, and raking together the fire that had been smoldering all the night.

Breakfast was prepared, and they were about to partake thereof, when the doctor took counsel with Joses as to what was best to be done.

"Do you think they will molest us now?" he asked.

"No, boss, I don't think so, but there's no knowing how to take an Indian. I should be very careful about the horses though, for a good horse is more than an Indian can resist."

"I have thought the same; and it seems to me that we had better stay here until this party has gone, for I don't want them to be following us from place to place."

"There's a band of 'em somewhere not far away," said Joses, "depend upon it. So p'raps it will be best to wait till we see which way they go, and then go t'otherwise."

Soon after breakfast the chief came up to the wagon and held out his arm to be examined, smiling gravely, and looking satisfaction, as it was very plain that a great deal of the swelling had subsided.

This went on for some days, during which the Indians seemed perfectly content with their quarters, they having found a better supply of water ; and to show their friendliness, they made foraging expeditions, and brought in game, which they shared in a very liberal way.

This was all very well, but still it was not pleasant to have them as neighbors, and several times over the doctor made up his mind to start and continue his expedition, and this he would have done but for the fact of his being sure that their savage friends, for this they now seemed to be, would follow them.

At the end of ten days the chief's arm had wonderfully altered, the healthy, active life he led conducing largely towards the cure. But he was always quiet and reserved, making no advances, and always keeping aloof with his watchful little band.

"We are wasting time horribly," said the doctor, one morning. "We'll start at once."

"Why not wait till night and steal off?" said Maude.

"Because we could not hide our trail," said Bart. "The Indians could follow us. I think 't will be best to let them see we don't mind them, and go away boldly."

"That's what I mean to do," said the doctor ; and directly they had ended their meal the few arrangements necessary were made, and after going to the camp and shaking hands all round with the stolid Indians, the horses were mounted, the wagon set in motion, and they rode back along the valley. Passing the Indian camp, they arrived at the opening through which, bearing off to the west, the Indians reached the plains, and for hours kept on winding in and out amongst the hills.

It was after sundown that the doctor called a halt, a short rest in the very heat of the day being the

only break which they had had in their journey. In fact, as darkness would soon be upon them, it would have been madness to proceed farther, the country having become so broken and wild that it would have been next to impossible to proceed without wrecking the wagon.

Their usual precautions were taken as soon as a satisfactory nook was found with a fair supply of water, and soon after sunrise next morning, all having been well during the night, the doctor and Bart started for a look round while breakfast was being prepared, Bart taking his rifle, as there was always the necessity for supplying the wants of the camp.

"I wonder whether we shall see any more of the Indians," said Bart, as they climbed up amongst the rocks to what looked almost like a gateway formed by a couple of boldly scarped masses, in whose strata lines various plants and shrubs maintained a precarious existence.

"I wonder they have not followed us before now," replied the doctor. "Mind how you come. Can you climb it?"

For answer, Bart leapt up to where the doctor had clambered, as easily as a mountain sheep. After a little further effort they left the level, changeless plain on the other side of the rocks, and the sight of a fresh character of country was sufficient to make the doctor eagerly take the little telescope he carried in a sling, and begin to sweep the horizon.

As he did so he let fall words about the beauty of the country.

"Splendid grazing land," he said, "well watered. We must have a stay here." Then lowering his glass so as to take the landscape closer in, he uttered an ejaculation of astonishment.

"Why, Bart," he said, "I'm afraid here are the Indians Joses saw that night."

"Let me look, sir," cried Bart, stretching out his hand for the glass, but only to exclaim, "I can see them plainly enough without. Why, they cannot be much more than a mile away."

"And they seem to be journeying in our direction," replied the doctor. "Let's get back quickly, and try if we cannot find another hiding place for the wagon."

Hurrying back, Bart started the idea that these might be the main body of their friendly Indians.

"So much the better for us, Master Bart, but I'm afraid that we shall not be so lucky again."

"I half fancied I saw our chief among them," said Bart, giving vent to his sanguine feelings.

"More than half fancy, Bart," replied the doctor, "for there he sits upon his horse."

He pointed with his glass, and, to Bart's astonishment, there, in the little wilderness of rocks that they had made their halting place for the night, was the chief with his eleven followers, who were already tethering their horses, and making arrangements to take up their quarters close by them as of old.

"Do you think they mean to continue friendly?" asked Bart, uneasily, for he could not help thinking how thoroughly they were at the mercy of the Indians if they proved hostile.

"I cannot say," replied the doctor. "But look here, Bart, take the chief up to the gap and show him the party beyond. His men may not have seen them, and we shall learn, perhaps, whether they are friends or foes."

On reaching the wagon, as no attempt was made by the Indians to join them or resume intercourse, Bart went straight up to the chief and made signs to him to follow, which he proceeded to do upon his horse, but upon Bart pointing upward to the rocky ascent, he leaped off lightly, and the youth noticed

that he was beginning to make use of his injured arm.

In a short time they had climbed to the opening between the rocks, where, upon seeing that there was open country beyond, the Indian at once crouched and approached cautiously, dropping flat upon the earth the next moment, and crawling over the ground with a rapidity that astonished his companion, who was watching his face directly after, to try and read therefrom whether he belonged to the band of Indians in the open park in the land beyond.

To Bart's surprise, the chief drew back quickly, his face changed, and his whole figure seemed to be full of excitement.

He said a few words rapidly, and then, seeing that he was not understood, he began to make signs, pointing first to the opening out into the plain, and then taking out his knife and striking with it fiercely. Then he pointed once more to the opening, and to his wounded arm, going through the motions of one drawing a bow.

"Friends, friends, friends," he then said, in a hoarse whisper, repeating the doctor's word, and then shaking his head and spitting angrily upon the ground, and striking with his knife.

He then signed to Bart to follow, and ran down the deep slope just as one of his followers cantered hastily up.

Both had the same news to tell in the little camp, and though the doctor could not comprehend the Indian chief's dialect, his motions were significant enough, as he rapidly touched the barrels of his followers' rifles, and those of the white party, repeating the word "Friends."

The next moment he had given orders, which sent a couple of his men up the rocks to play the part of scouts, while he hurriedly scanned their position,

and chose a sheltered place, a couple of hundred yards back, where there was ample room for the horses and wagon, which were quietly taken there, the rocks and masses of stone around affording shelter and cover in case of attack.

"There's no doubt about these fellows being friends now, Bart," said the doctor ; "we must trust them for the future, but I pray Heaven that we may not be about to engage in shedding blood."

Just then the Indian held up his hand to command silence, and directly after, he pointed to places here and there that would command good views of approaching foes, while he angrily pointed to Maude, signing that she should crouch down closely behind some sheltering rocks.

The doctor yielded to his wishes, and then, in perfect silence, they waited for the coming of the Indian band, which, if the trail were noted, they knew could not be long delayed.

If Bart had felt any doubt before of these Indians with them being friendly, it was swept away now by the thorough earnestness with which they joined in the defense of their little stronghold. On either side of him were the stern looking warriors, rifle in hand, watchful of eye, and quick of ear, each listening attentively for danger while waiting for warnings from the scouts who had been sent out.

As Bart thought over their position and its dangers, he grew troubled at heart about Maude, the sister and companion as she had always seemed to him, and somehow, much as he looked up to Dr. Lascelles, who seemed to him the very height of knowledge, strength and skill, it filled his mind with forebodings of the future, as he wondered how they were to continue their expedition to the end without happening upon some terrible calamity.

"Maude ought to have been left with friends, or

sent to the city. It seems to me like madness to have brought her here."

Just then Dr. Lascelles crept up cautiously behind him, making him start and turn scarlet as a hand was laid upon his shoulder ; for it seemed to him that the doctor had been able to read his thoughts.

"Why, Bart," he said, smiling, "you look as red as fire ; you ought to look as pale as milk. Do you want to begin the fight?"

"No," said Bart, sturdily ; "I hope we shan't have to fight at all."

"Why have you left your post?" said the doctor, looking at Joses, sternly.

"Came to say, boss, that I think young miss aren't safe. She will keep showing herself, and watching to see if you are all right, and that'll make the Indians, if they come, all aim at her."

"You are right, Joses," said the doctor, hastily ; and he went softly back to the wagon, while Joses went on in a grumbling whisper:

"I don't know what he wanted to bring her for. Course we all like her, Master Bart, but it scares me when I think what it might lead to if we get hard pressed some of these days."

"Don't croak, Joses," whispered Bart ; and then they were both silent and remained watching, for the chief held up his hand, pointing towards the rocks beyond, which they knew that their enemies were passing, and whose tops they scanned, lest at any moment some of the painted warriors might appear searching the horizon with their keen, dark eyes.

The hours passed, and the rocks around them grew painfully heated by the ardent rays that beat down upon them. Not a breath of air reached the corner where such anxious guard was kept ; and to add to the discomfort of the watchers, a terrible thirst attacked them.

Bart's lips seemed cracking and his throat parched and burning, but this was all borne in fortitude ; and as he saw the Indians on either side of him bearing the inconveniences without a murmur, he forebore to complain.

Towards midday, when the heat was tremendous, and Bart was wondering why the chief or Dr. Lascelles did not make some movement to see whether the strange Indians had gone, and at the same time was ready to declare to himself that the men sent out as scouts must have gone to sleep, he felt a couple of hands placed on his shoulders, and then the long brown sinewy arm of the chief was thrust forward, with the hand pointing to the edge of the ridge a quarter of a mile away.

Following the indicated direction, Bart saw plainly enough first the head and shoulders of an Indian come into sight, then there was apparently a scramble and a leap, and he could see that the man was mounted. And then followed another and another, till there was a group of half a dozen mounted men, who had ridden up some ravine to the top from the plain beyond, and who were now searching and scanning the valley where the encampment lay.

Now was the crucial time. The neigh of a horse, the sight of an uncautiously exposed head or hand, would have been sufficient to betray their whereabouts, and sooner or later the attack would have come.

But now it was that the clever strategy of the chief was seen, for he had chosen their retreat not merely for its strength, but for its concealment.

Bart glanced back towards the wagon, and wondered how it was that this prominent object had not been seen. Fortunately, however, its tilt was of the color of the surrounding rocks, and it was pretty well hidden behind some projecting masses.

For quite a quarter of an hour this group of mounted Indians remained full in view, and all the time Bart's sensations were that he must be seen as plainly as he could see his foes; but at last he saw them slowly disappear one by one over the other side of the ridge; and as soon as the last had gone the chief uttered a deep "Ugh!"

There was danger though yet, and he would not let a man stir till quite half an hour later, when his two scouts came in quickly, and said a few words in a low guttural tone.

"I should be for learning the language of these men if we were to stay with them, Bart," said the doctor; "but they may leave us at any time, and the next party we meet may talk a different dialect."

The chief's acts were sufficient now to satisfy them that the present danger had passed, and soon after he and his men mounted and rode off without a word.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIERCE FOE.

THERE was nothing to tempt a stay where the travelers were, so, taking advantage of their being once more alone, a fresh start was made along the most open course that presented itself, and some miles were placed between them and the last camp before a halt was made for the night.

"We shan't do no good, Master Bart," said Joses, as the two kept watch for the first part of the night. "The boss thinks we shall, but I don't, and Juan don't, and Sam and Harry don't."

"But why not?"

"Why not, Master Bart? How can you 'spect it when you've got a young woman and a wagon and a tent along with you? Them's all three things as stop you from getting over the ground."

"You always would grumble, Joses; no matter where you were, or what we were doing, you would have your grumble. I suppose it does you good."

"Why, of course it does," said Joses, with a low chuckling laugh. "If I wasn't to grumble, that would all be in my mind making me sour, so I gets rid of it as soon as I can."

That night passed without adventure, and, starting at daybreak the next morning, they found a fine open stretch of plain before them, beyond which, blue and purple in the distance, rose the mountains;

and these were looked upon as their destination, for Dr. Lascelles was of the opinion that he might discover something to reward his toils.

The day was so hot and the journey so arduous, that upon getting to the farther side of the plain, with the ground growing terribly broken and rugged as they approached the mountain slopes, a suitable spot was selected, the tent was set up, and the quarters made snug for two or three days' rest.

The place reached was very rugged, but it had an indescribable charm from the varied tints of the rocks and the clumps of bushes, with here and there a low scrubby tree, some of which proved to be laden with wild plums.

"Why, those are wild grapes, too, are they not?" said Bart, pointing to some clustering vines which hung over the rock, laden with purpling berries.

"That they be," said Joses, "and as sour as sour, I'll bet. But say, Master Bart, hear that?"

"What? That piping noise?" replied Bart. "I was wondering what it could be!"

"I'll tell you, my lad," said Joses, chuckling. "That's young wild turkeys calling to one another, and if we don't have a few to roast it shan't be our fault."

The doctor was told of the find, and after all was made snug it was resolved to take guns and rifles and search for something likely to prove an agreeable change.

The heat of the evening, and the exertion of the long day's journey, made the party rather reluctant to stir after their meal; but at last guns were taken, and in the hope of securing a few of the wild turkeys a start was made. But after a stroll in different directions, Joses began to shake his head, and to say that it would be no use till daybreak, for the turkeys had gone to roost.

The doctor proposed that they should return to the tent. Signals were made to the men at a distance, and they had nearly reached the tent, when about a hundred yards of the roughest ground had to be traversed, where, among mighty boulders, awkward thorns, huge prickly cacti, and wild plums grew in profusion.

"Hough—hough—hough!" came from beyond a rugged piece of rock.

"Oh, father!" cried Maude, clinging to his arm.

"Don't hold me, child," he said fiercely; "leave my arm free;" and starting forward, gun in hand, he made for the place from whence the hideous, half roaring, half grunting noise had come.

Before he had gone a dozen steps the sound was repeated, but away to their right. Then came the sharp reports of two guns, and, evidently seeing something hidden from her father and Bart, Maude sprang forward, while they followed.

"Don't go, missy, don't go," shouted Juan, and his cry was echoed by Harry; but she did not seem to hear them, and was the first to arrive at where a huge bear lay upon its flank, feebly clawing at the rock with fore and hind paws, it having received a couple of shots in vital parts.

"Pray keep back, Maude," cried Bart, running to her side

"I wanted to see it," she said, with an eager glance around at her father, who came up rapidly. "What is it?"

"It's the half grown cub of a grizzly bear," said Dr. Lascelles, speaking excitedly now. "Back, girl, to the tent; the mother must be close at hand."

Just then the deep hoarse grunting roar came again from a hollow down beyond them. Directly after, as they hurried forward, they heard a shot and came in sight of Joses, with his rifle to his shoulder,

taking aim at a monstrous bear that, apparently half disabled by his last shot, was just turning upon him to make a dash and strike him down.

Just then a second shot rang out, and the bear rolled over, but sprang to her feet again with a terrific roar, and dashed at her assailants.

It was impossible to fire now lest Joses should be hit; and though he turned and fled, he was too late, for the bear, in spite of its huge, ox-like size, sprang upon him, striking him down, and stood over him.

But now was the time, and the doctor's and Bart's rifles both rang out, the latter going down on one knee to take careful aim; and as the smoke cleared away the bear was gone.

"She's made for those rocks yonder," cried Juan excitedly. "We'll have her yet, boss. She didn't seem hurt a bit."

Bart ran with his rifle at the trail over the rocks, and was guided by the savage growling he could hear amidst some bushes to where the monster was at bay.

It was fast approaching the moment when all would be in gloom, and Bart knew that it would be impossible for them to camp where they were with a wounded grizzly anywhere near at hand. Slain the monster must be, and at once; but though the growling was plain enough, the bear was not visible, and ammunition is too costly out in the desert for a single charge to be wasted by a foolish shot.

Juan, Harry and Sam were all in position ready to fire, but still the animal did not show itself, so they went closer to the thicket and threw in heavy stones, but without effect, till Juan exclaimed that he would go right in and drive the brute out.

Bart forbade this, however, and the man contented himself with going a little closer, and throwing in a heavy block.

A savage grunt was the result, and judging where the grizzly lay, Juan, without waiting for counsel, raised his rifle and fired. The shot was succeeded by a savage yell, and the monster came crashing out in a headlong charge, making straight for Bart, open mouthed, fiery eyed, and panting for revenge.

Bart's first instinct was to turn and run, his second to stand his ground and fire right at the monster, taking deadly aim.

But in a moment of peril like his there is little time for the exercise of judgment. Ere he could reach his rifle to his shoulder and take careful aim the bear was upon him, rising up on his hind legs, not to hug him, as is generally supposed to be the habit of these beasts, but to strike at him right and left with its hideously armed paws.

Bart did not know how it happened, but as the beast towered up in its huge proportions, he fired rapidly both barrels of his piece, one loaded with heavy shots for the turkeys, the other with ball, right into the monster's chest.

As he fired Bart leaped back, and it was well that he did so, for the grizzly fell forward with a heavy thud, almost where he had been standing, clawed at the rocks and stones for a few moments, and then lay perfectly still—dead.

The three men uttered a loud cheer, and ran and leaped upon their fallen enemy, but Bart ran back, loading his piece as he ran, to where he had left the doctor with poor Joses.

Bart felt his heart beat heavily, and there was a strange choking feeling of pain at his throat as he thought of rough, surly spoken Joses, the man who had been his guide and companion in many a hunt and search for the straying cattle; and now it seemed to him that he was to lose one who he felt had been a friend.

“Is he——”

Bart panted out this much, and then stopped in amazement, for, as he turned the corner of some rocks that lay between him and the tent, instead of addressing the doctor he found himself face to face with Joses, who, according to Bart's ideas, should have been lying upon the stones, hideously clawed from shoulder to heel by the monster's terrible hooks. On the contrary, the rough fellow was sitting up with his back close to a great block of stone, his rifle across his knees, and both hands busily rolling up a little cigarette.

“Why, Joses,” panted Bart, “I thought——”

“As I was killed? Well I ain't,” said Joses, roughly.

“But the *béar*—she struck you down—I saw her claw you.”

“You see her strike me down,” growled Joses; “but she didn't claw me, my lad. She didn't hit out far enough, but she's torn every rag off my back right into ribbons, and I'm waiting here till the doctor brings me something else and my blanket to wear.”

“Oh, Joses, I am glad,” cried Bart, hoarsely; and his voice was full of emotion as he spoke, while he caught the rough fellow's hand in his.

“Don't spoil a fellow's cigarette,” growled Joses, roughly, but his eyes showed the pleasure he felt. “But you've killed the bear among you?”

“Yes; she's dead enough.”

“That's well. Who fired the shot as finished her? Don't say you let Juan or Sam, or I won't forgive you.”

“I fired the last, and brought her down,” said Bart quietly enough.

“That's right,” said Joses; “that's right. You ought to be a good shot now.”

"But are you not hurt at all?" asked Bart.

"Well, I can't say as I arn't hurt," replied Joses, "because she knocked all the wind out of me as she sent me down so quickly, and she scratched a few bits of skin off as well as my clothes, but that don't matter; skin grows again, clothes don't. Humph! here comes the doctor with the things."

"A narrow escape for him, Bart. But how about the grizzly?"

"Dead, sir; quite dead," replied Bart.

"Now, Joses, let me dress your back."

"No, thank ye, mister; I can dress myself, bless you!"

"No, no; I mean apply some of this dressing to those terrible scratches."

Joses obeyed, and Bart shuddered as he saw the scores made by the monster's hideous claws, though Joses took it all quietly enough, and after the dressing threw his blanket over his shoulders, to walk with his master and Bart to have a look at the grizzly.

It was a monster indeed, being quite nine feet long, and massive in proportion, while its great sharp curved claws were some of them nearly six inches from point to insertion in the shaggy toes.

Such a skin was too precious as a trophy to be left, and before daylight next morning Juan, Harry, and Sam were at work stripping it off; Bart, when he came soon after, finding them well on with their task; Joses being seated upon a fragment of rock contentedly smoking and giving instructions, he being an adept at such matters.

Joses was so sore that for some days he could not mount his horse, and spent his time in drying the two bearskins in the sun, and dressing them on the fleshy side, till they were quite soft, and made capital mats for the wagon.

CHAPTER VII.

SEARCHING FOR GOLD.

ONE morning Joses expressed himself as being all right, and whatever pains he felt he would not show the slightest sign, but mounted his horse, and would have gone forward, only the doctor decided to spend another day where they were, so as to more fully examine the rocks, for he fancied that he had discovered a metallic deposit in one spot on the previous night.

It was settled, then, that the horses should go on grazing in the little meadow-like spot beside a tiny stream close by the wagon, and that the doctor, Juan, Joses, and Bart should explore the ravine where the doctor thought he had found traces of gold, while Sam and Harry kept watch by the camp.

After a few hours' walk, the doctor halted by the bed of a tiny stream, and after searching about in the sands for a time he hit upon a likely place, took a small portion of the sand in a shallow tin bowl, and began to wash it, changing the water over and over again, and throwing away the lighter sand, till nothing was left but a small portion of coarser fragments. Upon these being turned out in the bright sunshine and examined, there were certainly a few specks of gold to be seen, but so minute that the doctor threw them away with a sigh.

"We must have something more promising than that," he said. "Now I think, Bart, you and Joses



THE GROUP AROUND THE CAMP FIRE.—See page 5.

had better go along that ridge of broken rock close up to the hills and walk eastward for a few miles to explore. I will go with Juan to the west. Perhaps we shall find a likely place for going right up into the mountains. We'll meet here again at say two hours before sundown."

They parted, and for the next two hours Bart and Joses journeyed along under what was for the most part a wall of rock fringed at the top with verdure, and broken up into chasms and crevices, which were filled with plants of familiar or strange growths.

Sometimes they started a serpent, and once they came upon a little herd of antelopes, but they were not in search of game, and they let the agile creatures go unmolested.

The heat was growing terrific beneath the sheltered rock wall, and at last, weakened by his encounter with the bear, Joses began to show signs of distress.

"I'd give something for a good drink of water," he said. "I've been longing this hour past, and I can't understand how it is that we haven't come upon a stream running out into the plain. There arn't been no chance of the wagon going up into the mountains this way."

"Shall we turn back?"

"Turn back? No! not if we have to go right round the whole world," growled Joses. "Come along, my lad, we'll find a spring somewheres."

For another hour they tramped onward in silence, and all at once came a musical plashing sound, that made Joses draw himself up erect and say with a smile:

"There's always water if you go on long enough, my lad. That there's a fall."

And so it proved to be, and one of extreme beauty,

for a couple of hundred yards farther they came upon a nook in the rough wall, where the water of a small stream came pouring swiftly down, all foam and sparkle. Pulling a cow horn from his pocket, Joses walked closely up and caught the pure cold fluid as it fell.

"There, Master Bart," he said, filling and rinsing out the horn two or three times, "there you are. Drink, my lad, for you want it bad, as I can see."

"No, you drink first, Joses," said the lad; but the frontiersman refused, and it was not until Bart had emptied the horn of what seemed to be the most delicious water he had ever tasted, that Joses could fill and drink.

When he did begin, however, it seemed as if he would never leave off, for he kept on pouring down horn after horn, and smacking his lips with satisfaction.

"Ah, my lad!" he exclaimed at last. "I've drunk pretty nearly everything in my time, but there isn't anything as comes up anywhere like a horn of sparkling water like that when you are parched and burnt up with thirst."

"It is delicious, Joses," said Bart; "but now had we not better go back?"

"Yes, if we mean to be to our time, but suppose we go a little lower down there into the plain, and try if there's anything like what the boss is hunting for in the sand."

They went down for about a quarter of a mile to where there was a smooth sandy beach, and a cup being produced, they set to and washed several lots of sand, in each case finding a few specks, but nothing more. At last they gave it up, when Joses pointed to some footprints in the soil, where there was evidently a drinking place made by deer.

"What are those?" said Bart; "panthers?"

"Painters they are, my lad, and I dare say we could shoot one if we had time. Make a splendid skin for little miss."

As time was getting on, they sturdily set themselves to their backward journey, Joses praising the water nearly all the way, when he was not telling of some encounter he had had with Indian or savage beast in his earlier days.

"Do you think we shall see any more of the Indians, Joses?" said Bart, at last.

"What, Old Arrow-in-the-arm?"

"Yes."

"Sure to," said Joses. "He's a good fellow, that is. 'Tain't an Indian's nature to show that he's fond of you, but that chap would fight for the boss to the last."

"It seemed like it the other day, but it was very strange that he should go off as he did."

"Not it, my lad. He's gone to watch them Injuns, safe."

"Then he will think us ungrateful for going away."

"Not he. Depend upon it he'll turn up one of these days just when we don't expect it, and sit down just as if nothing had happened."

"But will he find our trail over such stony ground?"

"Find it? Ay, of course he will, and before you know where you are."

They trudged on in silence now, for both were growing tired; but just about the time appointed they came within sight of their starting place, the doctor meeting them a few minutes later.

"What luck?" he asked.

"Nothing but a glorious spring of water, and a stream with some specks of gold in the washing."

"I have done little better, Bart; but there is a

valley yonder that leads up into the mountains, and with care I think we can get the wagon along without much difficulty."

An early start was made next morning, and following the course mapped out by the doctor, they soon reached an opening in the hills, up which they turned, to find in the hollow a thread-like stream. As they proceeded, the mountains began to open out before them higher and higher, till they seemed to close in the horizon like clouds of delicate amethystine blue.

It seemed as if they must return, but somehow the wagon and horses were got over the obstacles, and a short level cheered them on to fresh exertions, while, as they slowly climbed higher, there was the satisfaction of knowing that there was less likelihood of molestations from Indians, the dangerous tribes of the plains, Comanches and Apaches, rarely taking their horses up among the rugged portions of the hills.

Maude, in her girlish freshness of heart, was delighted with the variety of scenery, while to Bart all was excitement. Even the labor to extricate the wagon from some rift, or to help to drag it up some tremendous slope, was enjoyable.

Then there were little excursions to make down moist ravines, where an antelope might be bagged for the larder; or up to some dry looking flat, shut in by the hills, where grouse might be put up amongst the sage brush and other thin growth, for six hard working men consume a great deal of food, and the stores in the wagon had to be saved as much as possible.

Today Bart and Joses were out "after the pot," as the latter called it, and on this occasion they had been very unfortunate.

"I tell you what it is," said Joses, at last, "we

shall have to go lower down. The boss won't never find no gold and silver up here, and food 'll get scarcer and scarcer, unless we come upon a flock of sheep."

"A flock of sheep up here?" said Bart, incredulously.

"Mountain sheep, my lad, with great horns twisted round so long and thick you get wondering how the sheep can carry 'em, and—there, look!"

He caught Bart by the shoulder and pointed to a tremendous slope, a quarter of a mile away, where, in the clear pure air the lad could see a flock of about twenty sheep evidently watching them.

"They're the sliest, artfulest things as ever was," whispered Joses. "Down softly, and let's back again; we must circumvent them, and get behind 'em for a shot."

"Too late," said Bart, and he was right, for suddenly the whole herd went off at a tremendous pace along a slope that seemed to be quite a precipice, and the next moment they were gone.

"That's up for today," said Joses, shouldering his rifle. "We may go back and try and pick up a bird or two. Tomorrow we'll come along, and p'r'aps get a shot at the sheep, as we know they are here."

They were fortunate enough to shoot a few grouse on their way back, and next morning at daybreak Bart and the four men started after the sheep, the doctor preferring to stay by the wagon and examine some of the rocks.

As the party climbed upwards towards the slope where the sheep had been seen on the previous day, Joses was full of stories about the sly nature of these animals.

"They'll lead you right away into the wildest places," he said, "and then, when you think you've got them, they go over some steep cut, and you

never see 'em again. Some people say they jump head first down on the rocks, and lets themselves fall on their horns, which is made big on purpose, and then bounces up again, but I don't believe it, for if they did they'd break their necks. All the same, though, they do jump down some wonderful steep places and run up others that look like walls. Here, what's Sam making signals for? Go softly."

They crept up to their companion, and found that he had sighted a flock of eleven sheep on a slope quite a couple of miles away. But for the assurance of Joses that it was all right, and that they were sheep, Bart would have said it was a patch of light color on the mountain.

As they approached cautiously, however, trying to stalk the timid creatures, Bart found that his men were right, and they spent the next two hours in cautious approach, till they saw that the sheep took alarm and rushed up to the top of the slope, disappeared for a moment, and then came back, to stand staring down on their advancing enemies.

"It's all right," exclaimed Joses; "we can get the lot if we like, for they can't get away. Yonder's a regular dip down which they can't jump. Keep your rifles ready, my boys, and we'll shoot two. That'll be enough."

As they spread out and slowly advanced, the sheep ran back out of sight, but came back again, proving Joses's words, that there was a precipice beyond them and their enemies in front.

Four times over, as the hunting party advanced, did the sheep perform this evolution, but the last time they did not come back into sight.

"They're away hiding down among the bushes," said Joses. "Be ready. Now, then, close in. You keep in the middle here, Master Bart, and have the first shot. Pick a good fat one."

"Yes," panted Bart, who was out of breath with the climbing. To rest him Joses called a halt, keeping a sharp lookout the while to right and left.

At the end of a few minutes they toiled up the slope once more, Joses uttering a few words of warning to his young companion.

"Don't rush when you get to the top, for it slopes down there, with a big wall going down beyond, and you mightn't be able to stop yourself. Keep cool, we shall see them together directly."

But they did not see the sheep cowering together as they expected, for though the top of the mountain was just as Joses had described, sloping down after they had passed the summit, and then going down abruptly in an awful precipice, no sheep were to be seen. After making sure that none were hidden, the men passed on cautiously to the edge, Bart being a little way behind, forcing his way through some thick bushes.

Just then a cry from Joses made him hurry to the edge, but he was too late to see what three of them witnessed, and that was the leap of a magnificent ram, which had been standing upon a ledge ten feet below them, and which, as soon as it heard the bushes above its head parted, made a tremendous spring as if into space, but landed on another ledge, fifty feet below, to take off once more for another leap right out of sight.

"We must go back and round into the valley," said Juan. "We shall find them all with their necks broken."

"You'll be clever if you do," said Joses, in a savage growl. "They've gone on jumping down like that right to the bottom, Master Bart, and——"

"Is that the flock?" said Bart, pointing to where a similar wall of rock rose up from what seemed to be part of a great canyon.

"That's them," said Joses, counting, "eight, nine, ten, eleven, and all as fresh as if they'd never made a jump. There, I'll believe anything of 'em after that."

"Why, it makes one shudder to look down," said Bart, shrinking back.

"Shudder!" said Joses, "I'd have starved a thousand times before I'd have made a jump like that. No mutton for dinner today, boys. Let's get some birds."

And very disconsolately and birdless they made their way back to the camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE EDGE.

BART was sufficiently observant to notice even amidst the many calls he had upon his attention, that Dr. Lascelles grew more and more absorbed and dreamy every day. When they first started he was always on the alert about the management of the expedition, the proportioning of the supplies, and matters of that kind; but as he found in a short time that Bart devoted himself eagerly to everything connected with the successful carrying out of their progress, that Joses was sternly exacting over the other men, and that Maude took ample care of the stores, he very soon ceased troubling himself about anything but the main object which he had in view.

Hence it was then that he used to sling a sort of game bag over his shoulder directly after the early morning meal, place a sharp, wedge-like hammer in his belt, shoulder his double rifle, and go off "rock chipping," as Joses called it.

"I don't see what's the good of his loading one barrel with shot, Master Bart, for he never brings in no game; and as for the stones—well, I haven't seen a single likely bit yet."

"Do you think he ever will hit upon a good mine of gold or silver, Joses?" said Bart, as they were out hunting one day.

"Well, Master Bart, you know what sort of a fellow I am. If I'd got five hundred cows I should

never reckon as they'd have five hundred calves next year, but just calculate as they wouldn't have one. Then all that come would be so many to the good. Looking at it fairly, I don't want to dishearten you, my lad, but speaking from 'sperience, I should say he wouldn't."

"And this will all be labor in vain, Joses?"

"Nay, I don't say that, Master Bart. He might find a big vein of gold or silver; but I never knew a man yet who went out in the mountains looking for one as did."

"But up northward there, men have discovered mines and made themselves enormously rich."

"To be sure they have, my lad, but not by going and looking for the gold and silver. It was always found by accident, and you and me are much more like to come upon a big lead where we're trying after sheep or deer than he is with all his regular trying."

Every time they journeyed on the toil became greater, for they were in most inaccessible parts of the mountain range, and they knew by the coolness of the air that they must now be far above the plains.

Bart and Joses worked hard to supply the larder, the principal food they obtained being the sage grouse and dusky grouse, which birds they found to be pretty plentiful high up in the mountains wherever there was a flat or a slope with plenty of cover; but just as they were getting terribly tired of the sameness of this diet, Bart made one morning a lucky find.

They had reached a fresh halting place after sundown on the previous night—one that was extremely attractive from the variety of the high ground, the depths of the chasms around, and the beauty of the cedars that spread their branches over the mountain sides, which were diversified by the presence of endless dense thickets.

"It looks like a deer country," Joses had said as they were tethering the horses amongst some magnificent grass.

These words had haunted Bart the night through, and hence, at the first sight of morning, he had taken his rifle and gone off to see what he could find.

Three hours' tramp produced nothing but a glimpse of some mountain sheep far away.

He was too weary and hungry to think of following them, and was reluctantly making for the camp when all at once a magnificent deer sprang up from amongst a thicket of young pines, and bounded off at an astonishing rate.

It seemed madness to fire, but, aiming well in front, Bart drew trigger, and then leaped aside to get free of the smoke. As he did so, he just caught a glimpse of the deer as it bounded up a steep slope and the next moment it was gone.

Bart felt that he had not hit it, but curiosity prompted him to follow in the animal's track, in the hope of getting a second shot, and as he proceeded he could not help wishing for the muscular strength of these deer, for the ground, full of rifts and chasms, over which he toiled painfully in a regular climb, the deer had bounded over at full speed.

It took him some time to get to the spot where he had last seen the deer, when, to his intense surprise and delight, he found traces of blood upon the stones, and upon climbing higher, he found his way blocked by a chasm.

Feeling sure that the animal would have cleared this at a bound, he lowered himself by holding on by a young pine which bent beneath his weight. Then he slipped for a few feet, made a leap, and came down amongst some bushes, where, lying perfectly dead, was the most beautiful deer he had ever seen.

Unfortunately hunger and the knowledge that others are hungry interfere with romantic admiration, and after feasting his eyes, Bart began to feast his imagination on the delight of those in the camp with the prospect of venison steaks. So, in regular hunter's fashion, he proceeded to partly skin and dress the deer, cutting off sufficient for their meal, and leaving the other parts to be fetched by the men.

There were rejoicings in camp that morning, and soon after breakfast Bart started off once more, taking with him Joses, Juan, and Sam, all of whom were exceedingly willing to become the bearers of the meat of which they stood in such great need.

The doctor had gone off in another direction, taking with him Maude as his companion, and after the little party had returned to the camp Bart was standing thoughtfully gazing at a magnificent eminence, clothed almost to the top with cedars, while in its rifts and ravines were dark foliage pines.

"I wonder whether we should find anything up there, Joses?" said Bart.

"Not much," said the frontiersman. "There'd be deer, I dare say, if the sound of your rifle and the coming of the sheep hadn't sent them away."

"Why should the sheep send them away?" asked Bart.

"I don't know why they should," said Joses, "all I know is that they do. You never find black tailed deer like you shot and mountain sheep living together as neighbors; it arn't their nature."

"Well, what do you say to taking our rifles and exploring?"

"Don't mind," said Joses, looking round. "Horses are all right, and there's no fear of being overhauled by Injuns up here, so let's go and take Sam with us, but you won't get no more deer."

They started directly after, and for about two

hours did nothing but climb up amidst cedar and pine forest. Sometimes amongst the trunks of big trees, sometimes down in gashes or gullies in the mountain side, which were full of younger growths, as if the rich soil and pine seeds had been swept there by the storms and then taken root.

"I tell you what it is, Master Bart," said Joses, suddenly coming to a halt to roll up and light his *cigarito*, a practice he never gave up, "it strikes me that we've nearly got to the end of it."

"End of what?" asked Bart.

"This clump of hills. You see if when we get to the top here, it don't all go down full swoop like a house wall."

"What, like the place where the mountain sheep went down?"

"That's it, my lad; only without any go up on the other side. It strikes me that we shall find it all plain on this side, and that if we can't find a break in the wall with a regular gulch, we shall have to go back with our horses and wagon and try some other way."

"Well, come along and let's see," said Bart, and once more they climbed on for quite half an hour, when they emerged from the trees on a rugged piece of open rocky plain, with scattered pines gnarled and twisted and swept bare by the mighty winds, and as far as eye could reach nothing but one vast, well watered plain.

"Told you so!" said Joses. "Now we shall either have to keep up here in the mountain or go down among the Injuns again, just as the boss likes."

"Let's come and sit down near the edge here and rest," said Bart, who was fascinated by the beauty of the scene, and, going right out upon a jutting promontory of stone, they could look to right and left at the great wall of rock that spread as far as they

could see. In places it seemed to go sheer down to the plain, in others it was broken into ledges by slips and falls of rocks; but everywhere it seemed to shut the great plain in from the west, and Bart fully realized that they would have to find some great rift or gulch by which to descend, if their journey was to be continued in this direction.

"How far is it to the plain?" said Bart, after he had been feasting his eyes for some time.

"Four to five thousand feet," said Joses. "Can't tell for certain. Chap would fall a long way before he found bottom, and then he'd bounce off, and go on again and again. I don't think the mountain sheep would jump here."

As they sat there resting and inhaling the fresh breeze that blew over the wide spreading plain, Bart could not help noticing the remains of a grand old pine that had once grown right at the edge of the stupendous precipice, but had gradually been storm beaten and split in its old age till the trunk and a few jagged branches only remained.

One of these projected from its stunted trunk close down by the roots, and seemed thrust out at right angles over the precipice in a way that somehow seemed to tempt Bart.

He turned his eyes from it again and again, but that branch fascinated him, and he found himself considering how dangerous it would be, and yet how delightful, to climb right out on that branch till it bent and bent, and would bear him no further, and then sitting astride, dance up and down in mid air, right over the awful depths below.

So strange was the attraction that Bart found his hands wet with perspiration, and a peculiar feeling of horror attacked him; but what was more strange, the desire to risk his life kept growing upon him, and as he afterwards told himself, he would no doubt

have made the mad venture if something had not happened to take his attention.

Joses was leaning back with half closed eyes and Bart was rising to his knees to go back and round to where the branch projected, just to try it, he told himself, when they heard a shout away to the left, and that shout acted like magic upon Bart.

"Why, that's Sam," he said, drawing a breath full of relief, just as if he had awakened from some terrible nightmare.

"I'd 'bout forgotten him," said Joses, lazily. "Ahoy! Oho!—eh!" he shouted back.

Then there was another shout and a rustling of bushes, a grunting noise, and Bart seized his rifle.

"He has found game," he said.

Then he nearly let fall his piece, and knelt there as if turned to stone, for, to his horror, he suddenly saw Sam down on his hands and knees, crawling straight out on the great gnarled branch that overhung the precipice, keeping to this mode of progression for a time, and then letting his legs go down one on each side of the branch, and hitching himself along, yelling lustily the while for help.

"He has gone mad," cried Bart, and as he spoke he thought of his own sensations a few minutes before, and how he had felt tempted to do this very thing.

"No, he ain't," said Joses, lifting his rifle; "he's got bears after him."

Almost as he spoke the great, rough, furry body of an enormous black bear came into sight, and without a moment's hesitation walked right out along the branch after the man.

"There's another," cried Bart; "shoot, Joses, shoot. I dare not."

It seemed that Joses dare not either, or else the excitement paralyzed him, for he only remained, like

Bart, staring stupidly at the scene before them, as a second bear followed the first, which, in spite of Sam's efforts to get into safety, had overtaken him, and throwing its forepaws around him and the branches as well, hugged him fast, while the second came close up and stood there growling and grunting and patting at its companion, who, fortunately for Sam, was drawing the claws at the end of its paws deeply into the gnarled branch.

"If I don't fire, they'll kill him," muttered Joses, as the huge branch visibly bent with the weight of the three bodies now upon it. "If I kill him instead it would be a mercy, so here goes."

He raised his rifle, took careful aim, and was about to draw the trigger. Just then the report of Bart's piece rang out, and the second bear raised itself on its hind legs, while the foremost backed a couple of feet, and stood growling savagely, with its head turned towards where it could see the smoke.

That was Bart's opportunity. Steadying his rifle upon a piece of rock, he fired again, making the foremost bear utter a savage growl, and begin tearing furiously at its flank.

Then Joses's rifle spoke, and the first bear reared up and fell over backwards, a second shot striking the hindmost full in the head, and one after the other the two monsters fell headlong, the first seeming to dive down, making a swimming motion with its massive paws.

They both struck the rock about fifty feet below the branch, and this seemed to make them glance off and fly through the air at a fearful rate, spinning over and over till they struck again at an enormous distance below, and then plunged out of sight, leaving Bart, sick with horror, to gaze upon the unfortunate Sam clinging to the limb that hung over the awful precipice.

CHAPTER IX.

SAM'S PERIL.

BART was brought to his senses by Joses, who exclaimed, sharply, "Load, my lad, load! you never know when you may want your piece."

Bart obeyed mechanically as Joses shouted, "Now, then, how long are you going to sit there?"

Sam, who was sitting astride the gnarled old limb, holding on tightly with both hands, turned his head slightly, and then turned it back, staring straight down into the awful depths, as if fascinated by the scene below.

"Here! Hi! Don't sit staring there!" cried Joses. "Git back, man!"

Sam shook his head and seemed to cling the more tightly.

"Are you hurt, Sam?" cried Bart.

Sam shook his head.

"Why don't you speak?" roared Joses, angrily. "Did the beasts claw you?"

Sam shook his head, but otherwise he remained motionless, and Bart and Joses went round to where the tree clung to the rocky soil, and stood gazing out at their companion and within some fifteen feet of where he clung.

"What's the matter, Sam? Why don't you come back?" asked Bart.

The man responded with a low groan.

"He must be badly hurt, Joses!" exclaimed Bart. "What are we to do?"

"Wait a minute till I think," said Joses. "He's hurt in his head, that's what's the matter with him."

"By the bear's claws?"

"No, my lad; they didn't hurt him. He's scar't."

"Frightened?" said Bart.

"Yes. He's lost his nerve, and daren't move."

"Let's say a few encouraging words to him."

"You may say thousands, and they won't do no good," said Joses. "He's got the fright, and badly, too."

"But the bears are gone!"

"Ay, that they are, my lad; but the fall's there, and that's what he's afraid of. I've seen men look like that before now when climbing up mountains."

"But it would be so easy to get back, Joses. I could do it directly."

"So could he, if he hadn't lost his nerve. Now, what's to be done?"

"Shall I creep out to him?" said Bart, eagerly.

"What! you? What good would it do? You don't think you could carry him back like a baby?"

"No," said Bart; "but I might help him."

"You couldn't help him a bit," growled Joses; "no more could I. All the good you could do would be to make him clutch you, and then down both would go at once, and what's the use of that?"

"If we had brought a lasso with us!"

"Well, if we had," said Joses, "and could fasten it round him, I don't believe we could haul him off, for he'd only cling all the tighter, and perhaps drag us over the side."

"What is to be done, then?" said Bart. "Here, Sam, make an effort, my lad! Creep back; it's as easy as can be. Don't be afraid. Here, I will come to you."

He threw down his gun, and before Joses could

stop him he climbed out to the projecting limb, and, letting his legs go down on either side, worked himself along till he was close behind Sam, whom he slapped on the back.

"There!" cried Bart. "It's easy enough. Don't think of how deep down it is. Now I'm going back; you do the same. Come along."

As he spoke and said encouraging things to Sam, Bart felt himself impelled to gaze down into the depths beneath him. As he did so, the dashing bravery that had impelled him to risk his life that he might encourage his follower to creep back, all seemed to forsake him, a cold perspiration broke out on face and limbs, accompanied by a horrible paralyzing sense of fear, and in an instant he was suffering from the same loss of nerve as the man whom he wished to help.

Bart's hands clutched at the rough branch, and he strove to drive his finger nails into the bark in a spasmodic effort to save himself from death. He was going to fall! He knew that he was! Nothing could save him—nothing! In imagination he saw himself lose his hold of the branch, slip sidewise, and go down headlong as the bears had fallen, to strike against the rocks, glance off, and then plunge down, down, swifter and swifter into space.

And so on, thought after thought of this kind, till all at once, as if out of a dream, a voice seemed to say to him:

"Well, I shouldn't have thought Master Bart, as I'd taught all these years, was such a coward!"

The words stung him, and seemed to bring him back to himself.

Coward! What would Maude think of him for being such a coward? Not that it would much matter if he fell down there and were smashed to death. What would the doctor, who had given him so many

lessons on presence of mind, coolness in danger, and the like? And here was he completely given up to the horror of his position, making no effort, when it was perhaps no harder to get back than it had been to get forward.

"I won't think of the depth," said Bart, setting his teeth, and, raising himself upright, he hitched himself a few inches back.

Then the feeling of danger came upon him once more, and was mastering him rapidly, when the great rough voice of old Joses rang out loudly, in a half mocking, half angry tone:

"And I thought him such a brave 'un, too."

"And so I will be," muttered Bart, as he made a effort to recover from his feeling of panic; and as he did so, he hitched himself along the branch towards the main trunk with his back half turned, and the next minute he was standing beside Joses, with his heart beating furiously, and a feeling of wonderment coming over him as to why it was that he had been so frightened over such a trifling matter.

"That's better, my lad," said Joses, quietly; and as Bart gazed on the rough fellow's face, expecting revilings and reproaches at his cowardice, he saw that the man's bronzed and swarthy features looked dirty and mottled, his eyes staring, and that he was dripping with perspiration.

Just then Joses gripped him by the shoulder in a way that would have made him wince, only he did not want to show the white feather again, and he stood firm as his companion said:

"'Tain't no use to talk like that to him. It won't touch him, Master Bart. It's very horrid when that lays hold of you, and you can't help it."

"No," said Bart, feeling relieved, "I could not help it."

"Course you couldn't, my lad. But now we must

get old Sam back, or he'll hang there till he faints, and then drop."

"Oh, Joses!" cried Bart.

"I only wish we could get a bear on the bough beyond him there. That would make him scuffle back."

"Frighten him back?" said Bart.

"Yes; one fright would be bigger than the other, and make him come," said Joses.

"Do you think that if we frightened him he would try to get back then?" whispered Bart.

"I'm sure of it," said Joses.

"Do as I do then," said Bart, as he picked up his rifle. Then he exclaimed:

"Joses, we must not leave the poor fellow there to die of hunger. He can't get back, so let's put him out of his misery at once. Where shall I aim at? His heart?"

"No, no, Master Bart; his head. Send a bullet right through his skull, and it'll be all over at once. You fire first."

Without a moment's hesitation Bart rested the barrel of his rifle against the trunk, took careful aim, and fired so that the bullet whistled pretty closely by Sam's ear.

The man started and shuddered, seeming as if he were going to sit up, but he relapsed into the former position.

"I think I can do it, Master Bart, this time," said Joses; and laying his piece in a notch formed by the bark, he took careful aim, and fired, his bullet going through Sam's hat, and carrying it off to go fluttering down into the abyss.

This time Sam did not move, and Bart gazed at Joses in despair.

Bart hesitated for a few moments as he reloaded his rifle, and then he shouted to Sam.

"Now, no nonsense, Sam. You must get back."

The man paid no heed to him, and Bart turned to Joses to say loudly:

"We can't leave him here like this. He must climb back or fall; so if he won't climb back the sooner he is out of his misery the better."

"That's a true word," said Joses.

"Give me your axe, then," said Bart, and Joses drew it from his belt, when Bart took it, and after moistening his hands, drove it into the branch just where it touched the tree, making a deep incision, and then drove it in again, when a white, wedge shaped chip flew out, for the boy had been early in life taught the use of the axe.

Then, cutting rapidly and well, he sent the chips flying, while every stroke sent a quiver along the great branch.

Still Sam clung to the spot where he had been from the first, and made no effort to move. And at last, when he was half way through the branch, Bart stopped short in despair, for the pretense of cutting it off had not the slightest effect upon Sam.

"Tired, Master Bart?" cried Joses; and, snatching away the axe, he began to apply it with tremendous effect, the chips flying over the precipice, and a great yawning opening appeared in the upper part of the branch.

"Don't cut any farther, Joses," whispered Bart, "it will give way!"

"I shall cut till it begins to, Master Bart," replied the man; and as he spoke he went on making the chips fly, but still without effect, for Sam did not move.

"I shall have to give up directly, my lad," whispered Joses, with a peculiar look; "but I'll have one more chop."

He raised the axe and delivered another sharp

blow, when there was a loud crack as if half a dozen rifles had gone off at once, and almost before the fact could be realized the branch went down, to remain hanging only by a few tough portions of its under part.

Bart and Joses looked over the precipice, aghast at what they had done, and gazed down at Sam's wild face, as, with his legs dislodged from their position, he seemed to have been turned right over, and to be clinging solely in a death grip with his arms.

Then, with cat-like alacrity, he seemed to wrench himself round, holding on to the lower part of the bough with his legs; and the next moment he was climbing steadily up, with the bough swinging to and fro beneath his weight.

It was a question now of the toughness of the fibers by which the bough hung; and the strain upon the minds of the watchers was terrible as they crouched there gazing over the edge of the awful precipice, momentarily expecting to see branch and man go headlong down as the bears had fallen before them.

But Sam climb steadily up during what seemed to be a long time, but which was only a few moments, reaching at last the jagged points where the branch was broken, when there came an ominous crack, and Sam paused as if irresolute.

"Keep it up," panted Bart, and his words seemed to electrify the man, who made one or two more clutches at the branch and then he was in safety beside his companions, staring stupidly from one to the other.

"I didn't think I was going to get back," he said at last. "It was you cutting the branch did it; I shouldn't have moved else."

There was no show of resentment—no annoyance

at having been treated in this terrible manner. Sam only seemed very thankful for his escape, and, trotting off to where he had dropped his rifle when pursued by the bears, he rejoined his companions and proceeded with them back towards the camp.

Upon learning the fact that they had so nearly crossed the ridge of mountains, the doctor resolved the next day to proceed as far as the point where the adventure with the bears had taken place, and there endeavor, by the aid of his glass, to determine which direction to take; whether to find a ravine by which they might descend into the plain, or whether it would be better to remain amongst these mountains, and here continue his search.

The place was reached in due time, and for the time being there seemed to be no chance of getting down into the plain, either to search for the bears or to pursue their course in that direction.

The doctor examined the slopes and ravines, plunged down into the most sheltered chasms, and clipped at the fragments of rock, but no sign of silver rewarded the search, and they returned to camp empty handed.

CHAPTER X.

BEAVER-WITH-THE-SHARP-TEETH.

IN these thorough solitudes amongst the hills the practice of keeping watch had not been so strictly attended to as during the journey in the plains, for the Indians seldom visited these rugged places—in fact, none but the searchers after mineral treasures were likely to come into these toilsome regions. Hence it was then that the next night the party were so wanting in vigilance.

Harry had been appointed to the latter half of the night, and after diligently keeping guard through the earlier hours, Josef awakened his successor, and, fully trusting in his carrying out his duties, went and lay down in his blanket, and in a few seconds was fast asleep.

That morning at sunrise, after a delicious night's rest, Bart rose to have a look round before breakfast, when to his horror he saw that the camp was apparently in the hands of the Indians, who had been allowed by the negligent sentinel to approach while those who would have defended it slept.

Bart's first movement was to seize his gun, his next to arouse the doctor.

Then he stopped short, sorry for what he had done, for just then, free from all stiffness in his wounded arm, their old friend the chief came striding across the open space before the wagon, and upon seeing Bart held out his hands in token of friendship.

Bart shook hands with him; as he glanced round he could see that the faces of those around were all familiar except one, whom the chief had beckoned to approach, which the strange Indian did with a stately air. A short conversation between him and the chief took place, after which the new comer turned to Bart, and said in very fair English:

"The great chief, Beaver-with-the-Sharp-Teeth, bids me tell you that he has been back to his people to fetch one of his warriors who can speak the tongue of the pale faced people, and I am that warrior. The great chief Beaver-with-the-Sharp-Teeth says it is peace, and he comes to see his friends and the great medicine man, who brought him back to life when wounded by the poisonous arrows of the Indian dogs of the plains."

"We are very glad to see Beaver-with-the-Sharp-Teeth again," cried Bart, heartily, "and delighted to find he has brought a great warrior who can speak our language."

"So that it flows soft and sweet," said a hoarse voice, and Joses stood up. "How are you, chief?"

The hearty, friendly look and extended hand needed no interpretation, and the greeting between them was warm enough to bring smiles into the faces of all the Indians, who had no scruple soon afterwards about finishing the mountain mutton.

After the breakfast Bart and the doctor learned that the chief Beaver, as it was settled to call him, had been off really on purpose to get an interpreter, knowing that he could find the trail of his friends again, and this he had done, following them into the mountains, and coming upon them as we have seen.

Conversation was easy now, and Bart learned that their friends had had a severe fight in the plains a short time before the first meeting, and that Beaver was sure that he would die of his wound, and be left

in the wilderness the same as they had left fifteen of their number, the odds against them having been terribly great.

Later on came questions, the Beaver being anxious to know why the doctor's party were there.

"You have not come upon the war path," the Beaver said, "for you are weak in number, and you have brought a woman. Why are you here?"

Then the doctor explained his object—to find a vein of either gold or silver somewhere in the mountains, and as soon as it was all interpreted, the chief laughed outright.

"He does not set much store by the precious metals, Bart," said the doctor; "and when I see the simplicity of their ways, it almost makes me ashamed of our own."

Just then the Beaver talked earnestly for a few moments with the warrior who interpreted, and returned to the doctor.

"The Beaver-with-the-Sharp-Teeth says you gave him life when all was growing black, and he thought to see his people never more; and now he says that he rejoices that he can take his brother across the plains to where a great river runs deep down by the side of a mighty mountain, where there is silver in greater quantities than can be carried away."

"Does the chief know of such a place?" cried the doctor, excitedly.

"Yes; he and I have seen it often," said the Indian.

"And will he take me there?"

"Yes; the Beaver will take his brother there, and give it all into his hands."

"At last!" cried the doctor, excitedly. Then in a low voice, "Suppose it should not prove to be silver after all?"

"I know it is silver," said the Indian, quietly.

"Look," he cried, taking a clumsily made ring from his medicine bag, "that came from there, so did the ring upon the lariat of the chief."

"Ask him when he will take me there," cried the doctor.

"He says now," replied the Indian, smiling at the doctor's eagerness and excitement. "It is a long way, and the plains are hot, and there is little water; but we can hunt as we go, and all will be well."

"You know the way from here down into the plain," said the doctor. "It is a long way, is it not?"

The Indian smiled. "It is a very short journey," he said. "I know the way."

They started as soon as the camp was struck, and the Beaver, leading the way, took them down a deep gulch, of whose existence they were unaware, by which they made an easy descent into the plain. They hurried on with such good effect that at sunset the bold bluff, where the adventure with the bears had taken place, stood up in the distance, with the steep wall falling away on either side, looking diminutive from where they were.

When they were camping for the night, and Black Boy, Bart's cob, had been divested of saddle and bridle, and after being watered was about to be secured by the lariat to the tether peg, the excitable little creature, that had been till now all docility and tractableness, suddenly uttered a shrill neigh, pranced, reared up, and before Bart could seize it by the mane, went off across the plain like the wind.

The loss of such a beast would have been irreparable, and the doctor and Joses ran to untether their horses to join pursuit. Before they could reach them the Beaver and half a dozen of his men were after the cob at full speed, loosing their lariats as they rode and holding them over their heads

ready to use as lassos as soon as they could get within reach of the fugitive.

Bart was helpless, for there was no horse of their own left that was of the slightest use for pursuit of his swift little cob. All he could do was to stare after those engaged in the pursuit in a hopeless way as the truant galloped on at full speed, swishing its tail, tossing its head, and apparently reveling in its newly found liberty.

All at once Bart became aware of the fact that one of the Indians had been for some minutes watching him attentively, and the man had uttered a low guttural laugh, as if he were enjoying the youth's misfortune.

"I wonder how he would like it," thought Bart, as he darted an indignant look at the Indian, who sat upon his swift pony like a group cut in bronze. "He might just as well have gone after Black Boy, for his pony looks as if it could go."

Just then the Indian threw himself lightly from his nag and drew near to Bart, with the horsehair rein in his hand. Then he made signs to the young fellow to mount.

"Do you mean that you will lend me the pony to go after my own?" said Bart, eagerly.

The Indian did not understand his words, but evidently realized their meaning, for he smiled and nodded, and placed the rein in Bart's hand. He leaped into the saddle, or rather into the apology for a saddle, for it was only a piece of bison hide held on by a bandage, while a sort of knob or peg was in the place of the pommel. This is a contrivance invented by the Indians to hold on by when attacking a dangerous enemy, so as to lie, as it were, alongside of their horse, and fire or shoot arrows beneath its neck, they being in this way thoroughly protected by their horses.

The Indian smiled and drew back, when Bart touched the pony with his heel, the result being that, instead of going off at a gallop, the little restive beast reared up, pawing at the air with its hoofs, and nearly falling backwards upon its rider. But the lad kept his seat, and the pony went on all fours again, but only to begin to "buck;" that is to say, instead of letting its back remain in an agreeable hollow curve, it curved its spine in the opposite direction, arching it as a cat would, and then began leaping up from the earth in a series of buck jumps, all four hoofs from the ground at once.

Still, in spite of this being the most difficult form of horse trouble to master, Bart kept his seat. He was jerked about a great deal, but he had been long used to riding restive horses, and he sat there as coolly as if in a chair.

The animal's pranks went on for a few minutes, the Indian looking smilingly on the while, till, seeing that Bart was not to be dislodged, the pony began to back and finally lay down.

This of course dismounted the rider, and with a neigh of triumph the pony sprang to its feet again, evidently meaning to bound off after Black Boy and enjoy a turn of freedom.

The pony had reckoned without its rider, for Bart was too old at such matters to leave his grasp of the rein, and the Indian cob's first knowledge of its mistake was given by a sharp check to its under jaw, round which the horsehair rope was twitched, the next by finding its rider back in his old place, where he had leaped as lightly as could be.

The Indian gave an approving grunt, and the pony resigned itself to its fate, and, obeying the touch of Bart's heel, went off at a fine springing gallop.

It was a long chase and an arduous one, for Black Boy seemed to scorn all attempts at capture, and

led his pursuers a tremendous run; and had it not been for his master, late as he was in the field, the cob would not have been captured that night. As it was, Bart went off at speed, setting at defiance prairie dogs' burrows, and other holes that might be in his way, and at last he contrived to cut off a corner so as to get nearer to his nag, when, taking the rein beneath his leg, he placed both hands to his mouth and uttered a long shrill cry.

It acted like magic upon Black Boy, who recognized it directly as his master's call, and having had his frolic, he trotted slowly towards where Bart cantered on, suffered himself to be caught, and the party returned in triumph, none the worse, save the tiring, for the adventure.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SILVER CANYON.

A WEEK'S arduous journey over a sterile stretch of country, where water was very scarce and where game was hard to approach, brought them at last in reach of what looked to be a curiously formed mountain far away in the middle of an apparently boundless plain. Then it struck Bart that it could not be a mountain, for its sides were perpendicular, and its top, at a distance, seemed to be perfectly flat; and long discussions arose between him and the doctor as to the peculiarity of the strange eminence standing up so prominently right in the middle of the plain.

While they were discussing the subject, the Beaver and his English speaking follower came to their side, and, pointing to the mountain, gave them to understand that this was their destination.

"But is there silver there?" said the doctor, eagerly, when the Indian smiled and said quietly:

"Wait and see."

The mountain, on being first seen, appeared to be at quite a short distance; but at the end of their first day's journey they seemed to have got no nearer, while after another day, though it had assumed more prominent proportions, they were still at some distance, and it was not until the third morning that the little party stood on the reedy shores of a long, narrow, winding lake, one end of which they had to

skirt before they could ride up to the foot of the flat topped mountain, which looked as if it had been suddenly thrust by some wondrous volcanic action right from the plain to form what appeared to be a huge castle many hundred feet high, and with no ravine or rift in the wall by which it could be approached.

All Bart's questions were met by the one sole answer from the Indian, "Wait and see;" and in this spirit the savages guided them along beneath the towering ramparts of the mountain, whose scarped sides even a mountain sheep could not have climbed. Towards evening rein was drawn close under the mighty rocks, fragments of which had fallen here and there, loosened by time or cut loose by the shafts of storms to lie crumbling about its feet.

There seemed to be no reason for halting there, save that there was a little spring of water trickling down from the rocks, while a short distance in front what seemed to be a wide crack appeared in the plain, zigzagging here and there, one end going off into the distance, the other appearing to pass round close by the mountain; and as soon as they were dismounted and the horses tethered, the Beaver signed to Bart and the doctor to follow him, while the interpreter came close behind.

It was a glorious evening, and after the heat of the day the soft, cool breeze that swept over the plain was refreshing in the extreme; but, all the same, Bart felt very hungry, and his thoughts were more upon some carefully picked sage grouse that Joses and Maude were roasting than upon the search for silver; but the doctor was excited, for he felt that most likely this would prove to be the goal of their long journey. His great fear was that the Indians in their ignorance might have mistaken some white shining stone or mica for the precious metal.

The crack in the plain seemed to grow wider as they approached, but the Indians suddenly led them off to the right, close under the towering flank of the mountain, and between it and a mass of rock that might have been split from it at some early stage in the world's life.

This mass was some forty or fifty feet high, and between it and the parent mountain there was a narrow rift, so narrow, in fact, that they had to proceed in single file for about a hundred yards, winding in and out till, reaching the end, the Indians stood upon a broad kind of shelf of rock in silence as the doctor and Bart involuntarily uttered a cry of surprise.

For there was a chasm in the plain below their feet, and they were standing upon its very verge where it came in close to the mountain, whose top was some seven hundred feet above their heads, while here its perpendicular side went down for fully another thousand to where, in the solemn dark depths of the vast canyon or crack in the rocky crust of the earth, a great rushing river ran, its roar rising to where they stood in a strangely weird monotone, like low echoing thunder.

The reflections in the evening sky lighted up the vast rift for a while, and Bart forgot his hunger in the contemplation of this strange freak of nature, of a river running below in a channel whose walls were perfectly perpendicular, and against which in places the rapid stream seemed to beat and eddy and swirl, while in other parts there were long stretches of pebbly and rocky shore. As far as Bart could judge, the walls seemed to be about four hundred feet apart, though in the fading evening light it was hard to tell anything for certain.

Just then the Beaver spoke. He had evidently been taking lessons from the interpreter, as smiling

loftily and half in pity at the eagerness of men who could care for such a trifle as white ore when they had horses and rifles, he pointed up at the perpendicular face of the mountain and then downward at the wall of the canyon, and said:

"Silver—silver. Beaver give his brother. Medicine man."

"He means there is silver here, sir, and he gives it to you," said Bart, eagerly.

"Yes. Give. Silver," said the chief, nodding his head, and holding out his hand, which the doctor grasped, Bart doing the same by the other.

"I am very grateful," said the doctor at last, while his eyes kept wandering about, "but I see none."

"Silver—silver," said the chief again, as he looked up and then down, ending by addressing some words in the Indian dialect to the interpreter, who pointed in the direction of the camp.

"The Beaver-with-the-Sharp-Teeth says, let us eat," he said.

This brought back Bart's hunger so vividly to his recollection that he laughed merrily and turned to go.

"Yes," he said, "let us eat by all means. Shall we come in the morning and examine this place, sir?"

"Yes, Bart, we will," said the doctor, as they turned back; "but I'm afraid we shall be disappointed. What was that?"

"An Indian," said Bart. "I saw him glide amongst the rocks. Was it an enemy?"

"No; impossible, I should say," replied the doctor. "One of our own party. Our friends here would have seen him if he had been an enemy long before we should."

"And so you think there is no silver here, sir?" said Bart.

"I can't tell yet, my boy. There may be; but these men know so little about such things that I cannot help feeling doubtful. However, we shall see, and if I am disappointed I shall know what to do."

"Try again, sir," said Bart.

"Try again, my boy, for there is ample store in the mountains if we can find it."

"Yes," he said, as they walked back, "this is going to be a disappointment." He picked up a piece of stone as he went along between the rocks. "This stone does not look like silver bearing stratum. But we'll wait till the morning, Bart, and see."

Upon reaching the wagon they found Joses smiling and sniffing as he stood on the leeward side of the fire, so as to get the full benefit of the odor of the sage grouse, which looked juicy brown, and delicious enough to tempt the most ascetic of individuals, while Maude laughed merrily to see the eager glances. Bart kept directing his gaze at the iron rod upon which the birds had been spitted and hung before the fire.

"Don't you wish we had a nice new loaf or two, Bart?" she said, looking very serious, and as if disappointed that this was not the case.

"Oh, don't talk about it," cried Bart.

"I won't," said Maude, trying to appear serious. "It makes you look like a wolf, Bart."

"And that's how I feel," he cried—"horribly like one."

Half an hour later he owned that he felt more like a reasonable being, for not only had he had a fair portion of the delicate sage grouse, but found to his delight that there was an ample supply of cakes freshly made and baked in the ashes while he had been with the doctor exploring.

Bart took one turn round their little camp before

lying down to sleep, finding to his satisfaction that the Beaver had posted four men as sentinels, Joses telling his young leader afterwards when he lay down that the chief had refused to allow either of the white men to go on duty that night.

"You think he is to be trusted, don't you, Joses?" asked Bart, sleepily.

"Trusted? Oh, yes, he's to be trusted, my lad. Injuns are as bad as can be, but some of 'em's got good p'int's, and this one, though he might have scalped the lot of us once upon a time, became our friend as soon as the doctor cured his arm. And it was a cure, too, for now it's as strong and well as ever. I tell you what, Master Bart."

No answer.

"I say, young one, are you asleep?"

No reply.

"Well, he has dropped off sudden," growled Joses. "I suppose I must tell him what another time."

Having made up his mind to this, the sturdy fellow gave himself a twist in his blanket, laid his head upon his arm, and in a few seconds was as fast asleep as Bart.

The latter slept soundly all but once in the night, when it seemed to him that he had heard a strange wild cry, and starting up on his elbow, he listened attentively for some moments, but the cry was not repeated. Feeling that it must have been in his dreams that he had heard the sound, he lay down again and slept till dawn, when he sprang up, left every one asleep, and stole off, rifle in hand, to have a look down into the tremendous canyon.

He recollected well enough the way they had gone on the previous evening, and as he stepped swiftly forward, there at the bottom of the narrow rift between the mass of fallen rock and the mountain, was

the pale horizon, with a few streaks above it flecking the early morning sky and telling of the coming day.

"The canyon will look glorious when the sun is up," said Bart to himself; "but I don't see any game about, and—oh!"

Click—click—click—click went the locks of his double rifle as he came suddenly upon a sight which seemed to freeze his blood.

He sprang to shelter, sheltering himself behind a block of stone, his rifle ready, and covering every spot in turn that seemed likely to contain the cruel enemy that had done this deed.

For there before him—but flat upon his back, his arms outstretched, his long lance beneath him—lay one of the friendly Indians, while his companion lay half raised upon his side, as if he had dragged himself a short distance so as to recline with his head upon a piece of rock. His spear was across his legs, and it was very evident that he had been like this for some time after receiving his death wound.

For both were dead, the morning light plainly showing that in their hideous glassy eyes, without the terrible witness of the pool of blood that had trickled from their gaping wounds.

Bart shuddered and felt as if a hand of ice were grasping his heart. Then a fierce feeling of rage came over him, and his eyes flashed as he looked round for the treacherous enemies who had done this deed.

He looked in vain, and at last he stole cautiously out of his lurking place; then forgot his caution, and ran to where the Indians lay, forgetting, in his eagerness to help them, the horrors of the scene.

But he could do nothing, for as he laid his hand upon the breast of each in turn it was to find that

their hearts had ceased to beat, and they were already cold.

Racing back to the camp he spread his news, and the Beaver and his little following ran off to see for themselves the truth of his story, after which they mounted, and started to find the trail of the treacherous murderers of their companions. During their absence the doctor examined the two slaughtered Indians, and gave it as his opinion that they had both been treacherously stabbed from behind.

It was past midday before the Beaver returned to announce that there had only been two Indians lurking about their camp.

"And did you overtake them?" asked Bart.

The chief smiled in a curious, grim way, and pointed to a couple of scalps that hung at the belts of two of his warriors.

"They were on foot; we were mounted," he said, quietly. "They deserved to die. We had not injured them, or stolen their wives or horses. They deserved to die."

This was unanswerable, and no one spoke, the Indians going off to bury their dead companions, which they did simply by finding a suitable crevice in the depth of the ravine near which they had been slain, laying them in side by side, with their medicine bags hung from their necks, their weapons ready to their hands, and their buffalo robes about them, all ready for their use in the happy hunting grounds.

This done, they were covered with bushes, and then with stones, and the Indians returned to camp.

CHAPTER XII.

IN NATURE'S STOREHOUSE.

THE tragic event seemed to add terribly to the sense of insecurity felt by the doctor, and Joses was not slow to speak out.

"We may have a mob of horse Injuns down upon us at any moment," he growled. "I don't think we're very safe."

"Joses is right," said the doctor; "we must see if there is a rich deposit of silver here, and then, if all seems well, we must return, and get together a force of recruits so as to be strong enough to resist the Indians, should they attack us, and ready to work the mines."

"Haven't seen no mines yet," growled Joses.

The doctor coughed with a look of vexation upon his countenance, and, beckoning to the chief, he took his rifle. Bart rose, and leaving Joses in charge of the camp, they started for the edge of the canyon.

There was no likelihood of enemies being about the place after the event of the morning, but to the little party every shrub and bush, every stone, seemed to suggest a lurking place for a treacherous enemy. Still they pressed on, the chief taking them, for some unknown reason, in the opposite route, along beneath the perpendicular walls of the mountain, which here ran straight up from the plain.

They went by a rugged patch of broken rock, and by what seemed to be a great post, stuck up there by human hands, but which proved, on a nearer approach, to be the remains of a moderate sized tree that had been struck by lightning, the whole of the upper portion having been charred away, leaving only some ten feet standing up out of the ground.

A short distance further on, as they were close in by the steep wall of rock, they came to a slight projection, as if a huge piece had slipped down from above, and, turning sharply round this, the Beaver pointed to a narrow rift just wide enough to allow of the passage of one man at a time.

He signed to the doctor to enter, and climbing over a few rough stones, the latter passed in and out of sight.

"Bart! quick, my boy! quick!" he said, directly after, and the lad sprang in to help him, as he thought, in some perilous adventure, but only to stop and stare at the long sloping narrow passage fringed with prickly cactus plants, which slope ran evidently up the side of the mountain.

"Why, it's the way up to the top!" cried Bart. "I wonder who made it?"

"Dame Nature, I should say, my boy," said the doctor. "We must explore this. Why, what a natural fortification! One man could hold this passage against hundreds."

Just then the chief appeared below them, for they had climbed up a few yards, and signed to them to come down.

The doctor hesitated, and then descended.

"Let's see what he has to show, Bart. I have seen no silver yet."

They followed the Beaver down, and he led them straight back, past the camp, through the narrow ravine, once more to the shelf of rock overlooking

the canyon, and now, in the full glare of the sunny afternoon, they were able to realize the grandeur of the scene where the river ran swiftly down below, fully a thousand feet, in a bed of its own, shut out from the upper world by the perpendicular walls of rock.

The chief now made signs to the doctor to follow him, first laying down his rifle and signing to the doctor to do the same.

Dr. Lascelles hesitated for a moment, and then did as the chief wished, when the Beaver went on for a few yards to where the shelf of rock seemed to end, and there was nothing but a sheer fall of a thousand feet down to the bottom of the canyon, while above towered up the mountain, which seemed like a Titanic bastion round which the river curved.

Without a moment's hesitation the chief turned his face to them, lowered himself over the edge of the shelf down and down till only his hands remained visible. Then he drew himself up till his face was above the rock, and made a sign to the doctor to come on.

"I dare not go, Bart," said the doctor, whose face was covered with dew. "Would you be afraid to follow him, my boy?"

"I should be afraid, sir," replied Bart, laying down his rifle, "but I'll go."

"No, no, I will not be such a coward," cried the doctor; and going boldly to the edge, he refrained from looking over, but turned and lowered himself down, passing out of Bart's sight; and when the latter crept to the edge and looked down, he could see a narrow ledge below with climbing plants and luxuriant shrubs, but no sight of the doctor or his guide.

Bart remained motionless—horror stricken as the

thought came to him that they might have slipped and gone headlong into the chasm below; but on looking back he saw one of the Indians who was of the party smiling and evidently quite satisfied that nothing was wrong.

This being so, Bart remained gazing down into the canyon, listening intently, and wondering whither the pair could have gone. Soon he heard a call:

"The Beaver's coming to you, Bart. Lower yourself down, my boy, and come."

These—the doctor's—words sounded close at hand, but the speaker was invisible.

"All right; I'll come," cried Bart; and as he spoke a feeling of shrinking came over him, and he felt ready to draw back. But calling upon himself, he went close to the edge, trying to look under, and the next moment there was the head of the Beaver just below, gazing up at him with a half mocking smile upon his face.

"You think I'm afraid," said Bart, looking down at him, "but I can't help that. I'll come all the same;" and swiftly turning, he lowered himself down till his body was hanging as it were in space, and only his chest and elbows were on the shelf.

Then for a moment he seemed to hesitate, but he mastered the shrinking directly after, and lowered himself more and more till he hung at the extremity of his hands, vainly seeking for a foot hold.

"Are you there, Beaver?" he shouted; and he felt his waist seized and his sides pinioned by two strong hands, his own parted company from the shelf, and he seemed to fall a terrible distance, but it was only a couple of feet, and he found himself standing upon the solid rock, with the shelf jutting out above his head, and plenty of room to peer about amongst the clustering bushes.

The chief smiled at his startled look, and, pointing to the left, Bart glanced sidewise at where the precipice went down, and then walked onward cautiously along a rugged shelf not much unlike the one from which he had descended, save that it was densely covered with shrubby growth.

This shelf suddenly ended in a rift like a huge crevice in the face of the mountain, but there was a broad crack before it, and this it was necessary to leap before entering the rift.

Bart stopped short, gazing down into what seemed an awful abyss, but the Beaver passed him lightly, as if there were no danger whatever, and lightly leaped across to some rough pieces of rock. The distance was nothing, but the depths below made it seem an awful leap, till Bart felt that the doctor must have gone over it before him, and without further hesitation he bounded across and stood beside the chief, who led the way farther into the rift to where, some fifty feet from the entrance, the doctor was standing, hammer in hand, gazing intently at the newly chipped rock and the fragments that lay around.

"At last, Bart," he cried, joyously.

"What! Is it a vein?" said Bart, eagerly.

"A vein, boy? It is a mountain of a silver—a valley of silver. Here are great threads of the precious metal, and masses of ore as well. It seems as if it ran right down the sides of the canyon, and, from what the Indian appears to know, it does, Bart. I never expected to make such a find as this."

As he spoke, he handed pieces of the rock to Bart, who found that in some there were angular pieces of what seemed to be native silver, while others were full of threads and veins, or appeared as pieces of dull metalliferous stone.

"But how are we to carry it away, sir?" asked Bart, dryly.

"Carry it away! Why, do you not understand that this mine will want working, and that we must have a large number of men here? But come, let's get back. I must tell my child. Such a discovery was never made before."

As he spoke, he was already climbing up towards the shelf, his excitement in his tremendous find making him forget the risks he kept running. Bart drew his breath hard, climbing slowly after his companion, till at last they stood once more upon the shelf.

They soon reached the little camp, where the doctor eagerly communicated his news to his child, and then taking Joses aside, he repeated it to him.

"Well, that's right, boss. I'm glad, of course; and hope it'll make you rich, for you want it bad enough after so many years of loss with your cattle. And now what's going to be done? Are we to carry the mountain back to the old ranch?"

The doctor frowned.

"We shall have to return at once, Joses, to organize a regular mining party. We must have plenty of well armed men, and tools, and machinery to work this great find. We must go back at once."

"Now, boss?"

"No, no, perhaps not for a week, my man," said the doctor, whose nervous excitement seemed to increase. "I must thoroughly investigate the extent of the silver deposit, descend into the canyon, and ascend the mountain. Then we must settle where our new town is to be."

"Ah, we're going to have a new town, are we, boss?"

"To be sure! Of course! How could the mining be carried on without?"

Joses shook his head.

"P'r'aps we shall stay here a week, then, boss?" he said, at last.

"Yes; perhaps a fortnight."

"Then, if you don't mind, I think we'll move camp to that little patch of rocks close by that little old blasted tree that stands up like a post. I've been thinking it will be a better place; and if you'll give the word I'll put the little keg of powder in a hole somewhere. I don't think it's quite right to have it so near our fire every day."

"Do what you think best, Joses," said the doctor, eagerly. "Yes; I should bury the powder under the rocks somewhere, so that we can easily get at it again. But why do you want to move the camp?"

"Because that's a better place, with plenty of rocks for cover if the Injuns should come and look us up."

"Let us change, then," said the doctor, abstractedly; and that afternoon they shifted to the cluster of rocks near the blasted tree, close under the shelter of the mountain side. Rocks were cleared from a center and piled round; the wagon was well secured; a good place found for the horses; and lastly, Joses lit his cigarette, and then took the keg of gunpowder, carried it to a convenient spot near the withered tree, and buried it beneath some loose stones.

A hasty meal was snatched, and then the doctor went off again alone, while the Beaver signed to Bart to follow him, and then took him past the narrow opening that led to the way up the mountain, and showed him a second opening, through which they passed, to find within a good open cavernous hollow at the foot of the mountain wall, shut in by huge masses of rock.

"Why, our horses would be safe here, even if we were attacked!" exclaimed Bart, and, hurrying back, he fetched Joses to inspect the place.

"Do you think it is necessary, Joses?" said Bart.

"It's always necessary to be safe out in the plains, my lad," replied Joses. "How do we know that the Injuns won't come tonight to look after the men they've lost? Same time, how do we know they will? All the same, though, you can never be too safe. Let's get the horses inside, my lad, as we have such a place, and I half wish now we'd gone up the mountain somewhere to find our camp. You never know when danger may come."

"Horses in there," said Bart to the Beaver, and he pointed to the entrance.

The chief nodded, and seemed to have understood them all along by their looks and ways, so that when the horses, belonging to the doctor's party, were driven in that evening, he had those of his own followers driven in as well, and it was settled that Joses was to be the watchman that night.

It was quite sundown when the doctor returned, this time with Maude, whom he had taken to be an eye witness of his good fortune. Bart went to meet them, and that glorious, glowing evening they sat in their little camp reveling in the soft, pure air, which seemed full of exhilaration.

Then Bart went off to where Joses was smoking his *cigarito* and staring at the stars. He heard some unpleasant and annoying news.

"Drunk!" he exclaimed. "What? Sam and Juan? Where could they get the stuff? They must have crept under the wagon and broken a hole through, for the brandy lay there treasured up in case of illness."

"I'll thrash 'em both till they can't crawl," cried Joses, wrathfully. "It's no good, though, to do it

tonight, when they can't understand. Let them sleep it off tonight, my boy, and tomorrow morning we'll show the Beaver and his men what we do to thieves who steal liquor to get drunk. I wouldn't have thought it of them."

"What shall you do to them, Joses?" said Bart.

"Tie them up to that old post of a tree, my boy, and give them a taste of horse hair lariat. That's what I'll do to them. They're under me, they are, and I'm answerable to the boss. But there, don't say no more; it makes me mad, Master Bart. Go back now, and let them sleep it off. I'm glad I moved that powder."

"So am I, Joses," said Bart; and after a few more words he returned to the camp to find the two offenders fast asleep.

Bart was very weary when he lay down, after glancing round to see that all proper precautions had been taken; and it seemed to him that he had not been asleep five minutes when he felt a hand laid upon his mouth, and another grasp his shoulder. On looking up, there, between him and the sky was a dark Indian face.

For a moment he had thought of resistance. The next he had seen whose was the face, and obeying the sign to be silent, he listened while the Beaver bent lower, and said in good English, "Enemy, Indians coming."

Bart rose on the instant and roused the doctor, who immediately awakened Maude, and obeying the signs of the Indian, they followed him into the shadow of the mountain, for the Beaver shook his head fiercely at the idea of attempting to defend the little camp.

It all took place in a few hurried moments, and almost before they were half way to their goal there was a fierce yell, the rush of trampling horses, and

a dark, shadowy body was seen to swoop down upon the camp. While before, in his excitement, Bart could realize his position, he found himself with the doctor and Maude beyond the narrow entrance and on the slope that seemed to lead up into the mountain.

As soon as Maude was in safety, Bart and the doctor returned to the entrance, to find it well guarded by the Indians.

Then came a sort of muster or examination of their little force, which, to Bart's agony, resulted in the discovery that while all the Indians were present, and Harry was by their side, Joses, Sam and Juan were away.

In the excitement, Bart did not realize why this was. Now he recalled that when he lay down to sleep the two offenders had been snoring loudly, and it was evident that they were helplessly stupefied when the Indians came, and were taken.

But Joses?

Of course he was at his post, and the question now was, would he remain undiscovered, or would the Indians find the hiding place of the horses, and after killing Joses, sweep them all away?

The hours wore on, and though they could hear the buzz of many voices, and sometimes dark, shadowy forms could be made out away on the plains, the fugitives were in dense shadow and remained unmolested till the break of day.

By this time Bart had given Maude such comforting intelligence as he could, bidding her be hopeful, for that these Indians must be strangers to the place, or they would have known of the way up the mountain, and searched it at once.

"But if they find it in the morning, Bart," she said, "what then?"

"What then?" said Bart, with a coolness he did

not feel. "Why, then we shall have to kill all the poor wretches—that's all."

Maude shuddered, and Bart returned to where the Beaver was at the opening, watching the place where the enemy had been plundering the wagon, and had afterwards stirred up the camp fire and were seated round.

"Jose was glad that he had put away the powder," thought Bart, as he saw the glare of the fire. "I almost begin to wish it had been left."

CHAPTER XIII.

TWO HORRORS.

MORNING at last, and from their hiding place the fugitives could see that the Indians were in great numbers, and while some were with their horses, others were gathered together in a crowd about the tree trunk half way between the gate of the mountain, as Bart called it, and the camp.

The greatest caution was needed to keep themselves from the keen sight of the Indians, who had apparently seen nothing of the horses' trail. But if the Indians should begin to examine the face of the rock, they must find both entries, and then it was a question of brave defense, though it seemed impossible but that numbers must gain the mastery in the end.

"Poor Joses!" thought Bart, and the tears rose to his eyes. "I'd give anything to be by his side, to fight with him and defend the horses."

Then he began to wonder how many charges of powder he would have, and how long he could hold out.

"A good many will fall before they do master him," thought Bart, "if he's not captured already. I wonder whether they have Juan and Sam."

Just then the crowd about the post fell back, and the doctor put his glass to his eye, and then uttered a cry of horror.

He glanced round directly to see if Maude had heard him, but she, poor girl, had fallen fast asleep in the niche where they had placed her, to be out of reach of bullet should firing begin.

"What is it, sir?" cried Bart. "Ah, I see, and it is Juan, is it not?"

"Yes," said the doctor, using the glass, "and Sam. They have stripped the poor fellows almost entirely, and strung them up to a tree."

"Oh, yes," cried Bart, in agony, "I can see;" and he looked with horror upon the scene, for there, evidently already half dead, and their ankles bound, Juan and Sam were suspended by means of a lariat, bound tightly to their wrists, and securely twisted round the upper part of the old tree. The poor fellows' hats and a portion of their clothes lay close by them, and as they hung there, inert and helpless, Bart and his companion saw the cruel, vindictive Indians draw off to a short distance, and joining up in a close body, they began to fire at their prisoners, treating them as marks on which to try their skill with the rifle.

The sensation of horror this scene caused was indescribable, and Bart turned to the doctor with a look of agony in his eyes.

"Quick!" he said; "let us run out and save them."

The Indian who acted as interpreter spoke rapidly to the chief, who replied, and then the Indian turned to the doctor and Bart.

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth says if we want to go out to fight, they are so many we should all be killed. We must not go."

Twenty times over, the doctor raised his rifle, and as often let it fall, as he knew what the consequences of his firing would be. Encouraged by this act on the part of his elder, Bart did likewise, but the Beaver pressed the barrel down with his brown

hand, shaking his head and smiling gravely the while.

"See!" ejaculated the doctor; "what's that?"

They were all gazing intently at the tree where the firing was going on, and beyond it at the group of Indians calmly loading and firing, with a soft film of smoke floating away above their heads. All at once, just in their midst, there was a vivid flash of light, and the air seemed to be full of blocks of stone, which were driven up with a dense cloud of smoke. Then there was a deafening report, which echoed back from the side of the mountain; a trembling of the ground, as if there had been an earthquake, the great pieces of stone fell here and there; and then, as the smoke spread, a few Indians could be seen rushing hard towards where their companions were gathered with their horses, while about the spot where the earth had seemed to shoot forth flame, rocks and stones were piled up in confusion, mingled with the bodies of Indians.

There was no hesitation on the part of survivors. The Great Spirit had spoken to them in His displeasure, and those who had not been smitten seized their horses, those which had no riders now kept with them, and the whole band went over the plain at full speed.

The doctor sent Bart back to bid Maude be in no wise alarmed, for the enemy were gone, but she must not leave the place where she was hiding for a while.

Bart found her looking white and trembling with dread, but a few words satisfied her, and the lad ran back to join the doctor. Jose had now come out from his hiding place and was leaning upon his rifle.

"I am glad you are safe, Jose," cried Bart. "It is almost like a miracle that they didn't find you, and that the explosion took place. It must have

been our keg of powder, Joses, that you hid under the stones."

"Think so, Master Bart?" said Joses, as if deeply astonished.

"Yes," cried Bart; "it must have been that."

"Yes," said the doctor. "The wretches must have dropped a burning wad or something of that kind."

"But it was horrible!" cried Bart.

"Yes, horrible!" assented the doctor.

"But it saved all of us as was left, boss," said Joses, gruffly. "They'd have found us out else, and served us the same as they did poor old Sam and poor old Juan."

"Yes, it saved our lives, Joses, no doubt, and it was as it were a miracle. But there, don't let's talk about it. We must take steps to bury those poor creatures, and that before my child comes out. Do you think the enemy will come back?" he continued, turning to the interpreter.

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth says no—not for days," was the reply; and, willingly enough, the Indians helped their white friends to enlarge the hole plowed out by the explosion of the powder keg, which was easily done by picking out a few pieces of rock, when there was ample room for the dead, who, after some hour or two's toil, were buried beneath the stones.

The remains of the two poor fellows, Juan and Sam, were buried more carefully, with a few simple rites, and then, saddened and weary, the doctor turned to seek Maude.

Bart was about to follow him, when Joses took him by the sleeve.

"I wouldn't say anything to the boss, but I must tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"About the explosion, Master Bart. I did it."

"You fired that powder and blew all those poor wretches to eternity!" cried Bart, in horror.

"Deal more horrible if they'd killed Miss Maude."

"Oh, hush, Joses!" cried Bart, excitedly. "Tell me, though, how did you manage it?"

"Well, you see, Master Bart, it was like this. I stood looking on at their deviltry till I felt as if I couldn't bear it no longer, and then all at once I recollected the powder, and I thought that if I could put a bullet through the keg it would blow it up, and them too."

"And did you, Joses?"

"Well, I did, but it took me a long while for it. I knew exactly where it was, but I couldn't see it for the crowd of fellows round, and I daren't shoot unless I was sure, or else I should have brought them on to me like a shot."

"Of course! of course, Joses!" cried Bart, who was deeply interested.

"Well, I had to wait till I thought I should never get a chance, and then they opened right out, and I could see the exact spot where to send my bullet, when I trembled so that I daren't pull trigger, and when I could they all crowded up again."

"But they gave you another chance, Joses?" cried Bart, excitedly.

"To be sure they did, my lad, at last, and that time it was only after a deal of dodging about that there was any chance, and, laying my rifle on the rock, I drew trigger, saw the stones flash as the bullet struck, just, too, when they were all cheering—the wretches!—at what they'd done to those two poor fellows."

Bart promised to keep the matter a secret, and he went about for the rest of the day pondering upon the skill of Joses with the rifle.

In the busy times that followed there was but little

opportunity for dwelling upon the trouble. The doctor was full of the discovery and the necessity for taking steps to utilize its value, for now they were almost helpless—the greater part of their ammunition was gone; their force was weakened by the loss of two men; and at any moment the Indians might get over their fright and come back to bury their dead. If this were so, they would find that the task had been already done, and then they would search for and find the occupants of the camp.

This being so, the doctor suddenly grew calm.

"I've made my plans," he said, quietly.

"Yes?" exclaimed Maude and Bart in a breath.

"We must go straight back to our starting place, and then go on to Lerisco; and there I must get the proper authorizations from the Government, and afterwards organize a large expedition of people and bring them here at once."

He had hardly made this announcement when the Beaver came slowly up to stand with his follower, the interpreter, behind, and looking as if he wished to say something in particular.

The doctor rose and pointed to a place where his visitor could sit down, but the chief declined.

"Enemy!" he said, sharply. "Indian dogs!"

Then he turned round quickly to the interpreter.

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth says the Apaches will be back tonight to see why the earth opened and killed their friends."

"Indeed! So soon?" said the doctor.

"The chief says we must go from here till the Indian dogs have been, then we can come back."

"That settles it, Bart!" exclaimed the doctor.
"We'll start at once."

The preparations needed were few, and an hour later they were retreating quickly across the plain, the coming darkness being close at hand to veil their



BART'S FIRST MOTION WAS TO SEIZE HIS GUN.—See page 77.

movements, so that when they halted to rest in the morning they were a long distance on their way, and sheltered by a patch of forest trees that looked like the remains of some tract of woodland that had once spread over the plain.

It was deemed wise to wait till evening, and, taking it in turns, they watched and slept till near sundown.

The Beaver had had the last watch, and he had announced that he had seen a large body of Apaches going in the direction of the canyon, but at so great a distance off across the plain that there was no need for alarm.

They started soon afterwards, and after a very uneventful but tedious journey they reached the spot where they had first encountered the Beaver and his followers. Here the Indians came to a halt; they did not care to go farther towards the home of the white man, but readily entered into a compact to keep watch near the Silver Canyon, and return two moons hence to meet the doctor and his expeditionary party, when they were once more on their way across the plains.

The rest of the distance was got over in safety, and they rode at last into the town of Lerisco, where their expedition having got wind soon after they had started, their return was looked upon as of people from the dead.

For here the doctor encountered several old friends and neighbors from their ranches, fifteen or even twenty miles from the town, and they were all ready with stories of their misfortunes, the raids they had had to endure from the unfriendly Indians; and the doctor returned to his temporary lodgings that night, satisfied that he had only to name his discovery to gain a following of as many enterprising spirits as he wished to command.

Dr. Lascelles had two or three interviews with the governor, obtained a concession of the right to work the mine in consideration of a certain percentage of silver being paid to the government; and this being all duly signed and sealed, he came away light hearted and eager to begin.

His first care was to make arrangements for the staying of Maude in some place of safety; and he smiled to himself as he realized how easy this would be now that he was the owner of a great silver mine. It was simplicity itself.

No sooner did Don Ramon, the governor, comprehend what was required than an invitation came from his lady, a pleasant looking Spanish-Mexican dame, who took at once to the motherless girl, and thus the difficulty was got over, both the governor and his wife declaring that Maude should make that her home.

Then the doctor rode out to three or four ranches in the neighborhood and laid his plans before their owners, offering them such terms of participation that they jumped at the proposals. The result was that in a very short time no less than six ranches had been closed, the female occupants settled in the town, and their owners, with their wagons, cattle, mules, horses, and an ample supply of stores, were preparing for their journey to the Silver Canyon.

One evening, however, Bart, who was rather depressed at the idea of going without his old companion, Maude, although at the same time he could not help feeling pleased at the prospect of her remaining in safety, was returning to his lodgings, which he shared with Joses, when he overtook a couple of cattle breeders, old neighbors of the doctor, who were loudly talking about the venture.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised," said one, "if this all turns out to be a fraud."

"Oh, no; I think it's all right."

"But there have been so many cheats of this kind."

"True; so there have," returned the other.

"And if the doctor has got us together to take us right out there for the sake of his own ends?"

"Well, I shouldn't care to be him," said the other, "if it proves to be like that."

They turned down a side lane, and Bart heard no more. But this was enough to prove to him that the doctor's would be no bed of roses if everything did not turn out to be as good as was expected.

He reported this to the doctor, who only smiled, and hurried on his preparations.

At last, with plenty of rough mining implements, blasting powder, and stores of all kinds, the doctor's expedition started at daybreak one morning, in ample time to keep the appointment with the Beaver.

"I say, Master Bart," said Joses, as he sat upon his strong horse side by side with Bart, watching their train go slowly by, "I think we can laugh at the Apaches now, my lad; while, when the Sharp-Tooth Beaver joins us with his dark skinned fighting men, we can give the rascals such a hunting as shall send 'em north with fleas in their ears!"

"It's grand!" cried Bart, rousing himself up, for he had been feeling rather low spirited at parting at parting from Maude, and it had made him worse to see the poor girl's misery when she had clung to her father and said the last good by. Still there was the fact that the governor and his lady were excellent people.

And there sat Bart on his eager little horse, Black Boy, which kept on champing its bit and snorting and pawing the ground, shaking its head, and longing, after weeks of abstinence, for a long stretching gallop across the plains.

There were men mounted on horses, men on mules, "greasers" driving cattle or the baggage mules, some in charge of the wagons, and all well armed, eager and excited, as they filed by, a crowd of swarthy, poncho wearing idlers watching them with an aspect of good humored contempt and pity on their faces, as if saying to themselves, "Poor fools ! what a lot of labor and trouble they are going through to get silver and become rich, while we can be so much more happy and comfortable in our idleness and dirt and rags !"

A couple of miles outside the town the mob of idlers to the last man had dropped off, and bright and excited, the doctor rode up in the cheery morning sunshine.

"I'm going to ride forward, Bart," he cried, "so as to lead the van and show the line of march. You keep about the middle, and mind there's no straggling off to right or left. You, Joses, take the rear, and stand no tricks from stragglers. Every man is to keep his place and do his duty. Strict discipline is to be the order of the day, and unless we keep up our rigid training we shall be in no condition to encounter the Indians when they come."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE THIRSTY DESERT.

THE journey was without adventure. Signs of Indians were seen, and this made those of the train more watchful, but there was no encounter with the red men of the desert, till an alarm was spread one morning of a party of about twenty well mounted Indians being seen approaching the camp, just as it was being broken up for a farther advance toward the mountains.

The alarm spread; men seized their rifles, and they were preparing to fire upon the swiftly approaching troop, when Bart and Joses set spur to their horses, and went off at full gallop, apparently to encounter the enemy.

But they had not been deceived. Even at a distance Bart knew his friend, the Beaver, at a glance, and the defenders of the camp saw the meeting and the hearty hand shaking that took place.

This was a relief, and the men of the expedition gazed curiously at the bronzed, well armed horsemen of the plains, who sat their wiry, swift little steeds as if they were part and parcel of themselves, when they rode up to exchange greetings.

From that hour the Beaver's followers took the place of the guards, leading the van and closing up the rear, as well as constantly hovering along the sides of the long wagon train, which they guarded

as watchfully as if it were their own particular charge.

The doctor placed implicit reliance in the chief, who guided them by a longer route, but which proved to be one which took them round the base of the two mountainous ridges they had to pass, and thus saved the adventurers a long and arduous amount of toil with the wagons in the rugged ground.

At last, when they were well in sight of the flat topped mountain, and the doctor was constantly reining in his horse to sweep the horizon with his glass in search of the Apaches, the chief rode up to say that he and his men were about to advance on a scouting expedition to sweep the country between them and the canyon, while the train was to press on, always keeping a watchful lookout until their Indian escort returned.

The Beaver and his men scoured off like the wind, and were soon lost to view, while that night and the next day the long train moved slowly over the plain to avoid the dense clumps of prickly cactus and agaves, suffering terribly from thirst, for what had been verdant when Bart was there last was now one vast expanse of dust, which rose thickly in clouds at the tramp of horse or mule.

The want of water was beginning to be severely felt; and as they went sluggishly on Bart would have urged a halt for rest, only that the doctor was eager for them to get as well on their way as possible.

Night came at last, a wretched, weary night of intense heat; man and beast suffered horribly from thirst. The clouds had gathered during the night, and the thunder rolled in the distance, while vivid flashes of lightning illumined the plains, but no rain fell. When morning broke, after the most

painful time Bart had ever passed, he found the doctor looking ghastly, his eyes bloodshot, his lips cracked, and that even hardy Joses was suffering to as great an extent.

The people were almost in a state of mutiny, and ready to ask the doctor if he had dragged them to this terrible blinding waste to perish from thirst; while it was evident that if water was not soon reached half the beasts must fall down by the way.

As it was, numbers of the poor animals were bleeding from the mouth and nostrils from the pricks received as they eagerly champed the various plants of the cactus family.

"Let us push on," said the doctor; "everything depends upon our getting on to that shallow lake, for there is no water on the way;" but with every desire to push on, the task became more laborious every hour—the cattle were constantly striving to stray off to right or left in search of something to quench their maddening thirst, while, go where he would, the doctor was met by fierce, angry looks and muttered threats.

And so the journey went on all that day through the blinding, choking dust, and scorching heat, which seemed to blister and sting until it was almost unbearable.

"Keep it up, my lads," Bart kept on saying. "There's water ahead. Not much farther now."

At last, towards evening, the sky began again to cloud over, and the mountain that had appeared distant seemed, by the change in the atmosphere, to be brought nearer to them.

Almost by magic, too, the wind fell. There was a perfect calm, and then it began to blow from the opposite quarter, at first in soft puffs, then as a steady, refreshing breeze, and instantly there was a commotion in the camp—the cattle set off at a lum-

bering gallop; the mules, heedless of their burdens, followed suit; the horses snorted and strained at their bridles, and Joses galloped about, shouting to the teamsters in charge of the wagons, who were striving with all their might to restrain their horses:

"Let them go, my lads; unhitch, and let them go, or they'll have the wagons over."

"Stampede! stampede!" some of the men kept shouting, and all at once it seemed that the whole of the quadrupeds were in motion; for, acting upon Joses's orders, the teams were unhitched, and away the whole body swept in a thundering gallop onward towards the mountain, leaving the wagons solitary in the dusty plain.

For when the wind had turned, the poor suffering beasts had sniffed the soft moist air that had passed over the shallow lake, and their unerring instinct set them off in search of relief.

There was no pause, and all the mounted men could do was to let their horses keep pace with the mules and cattle, only guiding them clear of the thickest part of the drove. And so they thundered on till the dusty plain was left behind, and green rank herbage and thickly growing water plants reached, through which the cattle rushed to the shallow water at the edge of the lake.

But still they did not stop to drink, but rushed on and on, plashing as they went, till they were in right up to their flanks. Then, and then only, did they begin to drink, snorting and breathing hard, and drawing in the pure fresh water.

The horses behaved the most soberly, contenting themselves with wading in to a respectable distance, and then drinking when the water was undisturbed and pure, as did their masters; the doctor, Joses, and Bart bending down and filling the little metal cups they carried again and again.

It was growing dark as they turned from the shallow water of the lake, the mules following the horses placidly enough, and the lumbering cattle contentedly obeying the call of their masters, and settling themselves down directly to crop the rich rank grasses upon the marshy shores.

A short consultation was held now, and the question arose whether they had been observed by Indians, who might come down and try to stampede the cattle.

The matter was settled by one half the men staying to guard them, while the other half went back to fetch up the wagons, the mule drivers having plenty to do in collecting the burdens that had been kicked off, but which the mules submitted patiently enough to have replaced.

Still it was long on towards midnight before the wagons had all been drawn up to the shores of the lake, whose soft moist grasses seemed like paradise to the weary travelers over the desolate, dusty plains; and no sooner had Bart tethered Black Boy, and seen him contentedly cropping the grass, than, forgetful of Indians, hunger, everything but the fact that he was wearied out, he threw himself down, and in less than a minute he was fast asleep.

Waking with the bright sun shining over the waters of the lake, the cattle quietly browsing, and the well watered horses enjoying a thoroughly good feed, the troubles of the journey over the dreary plain was pretty well forgotten, and as fires were lit and meals prepared, there were bright faces around ready to give the doctor a genial "good morning."

Soon after, those on the lookout, while the rest made a hearty meal to prepare them for the toil of the day, announced Indians, and arms were seized, while men stood ready to run to their horses and to protect their cattle.

But there was no need for alarm, the new comers being the Beaver and his followers, who stated that they had come upon signs of Indians, and found that they had been by the mountain within the past day or two. But they had followed the trail, and found that their enemies had gone due north, following the course of the Great Canyon, and it was probable that they had finished their raid into these southern parts and would not return.

The rest of the journey was soon achieved, and the wagons drawn up in regular order close beside the mountain, while, after due inspection of the cavernous place where Joses had remained concealed with the horses, it was decided as a first step to construct with rocks a semicircular wall, whose two ends should rest against the perpendicular mountain side. This would serve as a corral for the cattle, and also act as a place of retreat for a certain number to protect them, the horses being kept in Joses's hole, as Bart christened the place.

There was plenty of willing labor now that the goal had been reached, and a few of the principals had been with the doctor to inspect the vein of silver, from which they came back enthusiastic to a degree.

Leaving the greater part busy over the task of forming the corral, the doctor called upon Bart and Joses, with three or four of his leading followers, to make the ascent of the mountain. To this end a mysterious looking pole was brought from the doctor's wagon, and given to one of the men to carry. A pick and some ropes and pegs were handed to Joses, Bart received a bag, and thus accoutered they started.

"Where are we going?" said one of the party, as he saw that they were walking straight for the perpendicular wall.

"Up to the top of the mountain," replied the doctor.

"Have you ever been up?" the man asked, staring at him wonderingly.

"No; but I believe the ascent will be pretty easy, and I have a reason for going."

"Is he mad?" whispered the man to Bart. "Why, nothing but a fly could climb up there."

"Mad! No," replied Bart, smiling. "Wait a bit and you'll see."

"Well, I wouldn't have believed there was a way through here!" said the man, slapping his leg, and laughing heartily, as they reached the narrow slit, crept through, and then stood with the long slope above them ready for the ascent. "It seems as if nature had done it all in the most cunning way, so as to make a hiding place."

"And a stronghold and fort for us," said Bart. "I think when once we get this place in order, we may set at defiance all the Indians of the plains."

"If they don't starve us out, or stop our supply of water," said Joses, gruffly. "Man must eat and drink."

By this time the doctor was leading the way up the long rugged slope, that seemed as if it had been carved by water constantly rushing down, though now it was perfectly dry. It was not above ten feet wide, and the walls were in places almost perpendicular.

It was a toilsome ascent, for at varying intervals great blocks of stone barred the path, with here and there corresponding rifts; but a little labor enabled the party to surmount these, and they climbed on till all at once the path took a new direction, going back as it were upon itself, but always upward at a sufficiently stiff angle, so as to form a zigzag right up the face of the mountain.

"It is one of the wonders of the world," exclaimed the doctor, enthusiastically.

"It's a precious steep one, then," grumbled Josés.

"I can hardly understand it yet," continued the doctor, "unless there has been a tremendous spring of water up on high here. It seems almost impossible for this path to be natural."

"Do you think it was made by men, sir?" said Bart.

"It may have been, but it seems hardly possible. Some great nation may have lived here once upon a time, but even then this does not look like the work of man. But let us go on."

It was quite a long journey to where the path turned again, and then they rested, and sat down to enjoy the sweet pure breeze, and gaze right out over the vast plain, which presented a wondrous panorama even from where they were, though a far grander view awaited them from the top, which they at last set off to reach.

At last, after a breathless ascent, Bart, who was in advance, sprang upon the top and uttered a loud cheer, but only to stop short as he gazed round in wonder at the comparatively level surface of the mountain, and the marvelous extent of the view around.

The doctor led the way half round till he found what he considered a suitable spot near the edge on the northern side of the mountain. There being no need to fear the Indians any longer, he set Josés to work with the pick to clear out a narrow rift, into which the pole they had brought was lowered, and wedged up perpendicularly with fragments of rock, one of which Bart saw was almost a mass of pure silver; then staves were set against the bottom, and bound there for strength; then guy ropes

added, and secured to pegs; and lastly, as a defiance to the Indians, and a declaration of the place being owned by the government, under whose consent they had formed the expedition, the national flag was run up, amidst hearty cheers, and its folds blew out strongly in the breeze.

"Now," said the doctor, "we are under the protection of the flag, and we can do as we please."

"Don't see as the flag will be much protection," growled Joses; "but it'll bring the Injuns down on us before long."

The doctor did not hear these words, for he was beginning to explore the top of the mountain and making plans for converting the place into a stronghold. Bart heard them, however, and turned to the grumbler.

"Do you think the Indians will notice the flag, Joses?" he said.

"Do I think the Injuns will notice it, Master Bart? Why, they can't help noticing it. Isn't it flap, flap, flapping there, and asking them to come as hard as it can? Why, they'll see that bit o' rag miles and miles away, and be swooping down almost before we know where we are. Mark my words if they'll not. We shall have to sleep with one eye open and the other not shut, Master Bart, that's what we shall have to do."

"Well, we shall be strong enough now to meet any number," said Bart.

"Yes, if they don't catch us just as we are least expecting it. Dessay the doctor knows best, but we shall never get much of that silver home on account of the Apaches."

"Oh, yes, we shall, Joses," said Bart, merrily. "Wait a bit, and you will see that the Indians can be beaten off as easily as possible, and they'll soon be afraid to attack us when they find how strong

we are. Perhaps they'll be glad to make friends. Now come and have a look round."

They went on along the edge of the tremendous cliff till they came above the canyon, down into which Bart never seemed weary of gazing. For the place had quite a fascination for him, with its swift, sparkling river, beautiful wooded islands, and green and varied shores.

The sides of the place, too, were so wondrously picturesque; here were weather stained rocks of fifty different tints; there rocks covered with lovely creepers, hanging in festoons or clinging close to the stony crevices that veined the rocky face in every direction. The shelves and ledges and mossy nooks were innumerable, and every one, even at that great height, wore a tempting look that drew the lad towards it, and made him itch to begin the exploration.

"Bart!"

It was the doctor calling, and on the lad running to him it was to find that he was standing by a great chasm running down far into the body of the mountain, with rough shelving slopes by which it was possible to descend, though the task looked risky except to any one of the firmest nerve.

"Look down there, Bart," said the doctor, rather excitedly; "what do you make of it?"

Bart took a step nearer so as to get a clearer view of the rent, rugged pit, at one side of which was a narrow, jagged slit where the sunshine came through, illumining what would otherwise have been gloomy in the extreme.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BUFFALO HUNT.

How far the chasm descended it was impossible to see from its irregularity, the sides projecting in great buttresses here and there, all of grey rock, while what had seemed to be the softer portions had probably crumbled away. Here and there, though, glimpses could be obtained of what looked like profound depths where all was black and still.

"What should you think this place must have been?" said the doctor, as if eager to hear the lad's opinion.

"Wait a minute, sir," replied Bart, loosening a great fragment of rock, which with some difficulty he pushed to the edge, and then, placing his foot to it, thrust it over, and bent forward to hear it fall.

The distance before it struck was not great, for there was a huge mass of rock projecting some fifty feet below upon which the stone fell, glanced off, and struck against the opposite side, with the effect that it was again thrown back far down out of sight; but the noise it made was loud enough, and as Bart listened he heard it strike heavily six times; then there was a dead silence for quite a minute, and it seemed that the last stroke was when it reached the bottom.

Bart was just about turning to speak to the doctor when there came hissing up a horrible echoing,

weird sound, like a magnified splash, and they knew that far down at an immense depth the great stone had fallen into water.

"Ugh!" ejaculated Bart, involuntarily imitating the Indians. "What a hole! Why, it must be ten times as deep as this place is high. I shouldn't care about going down."

"Horrible indeed, Bart; but what should you think? Is this place natural or dug out?"

"Natural, I should say, sir," replied Bart. "Nobody could dig down to such a depth as that."

"Yes, natural," said the doctor, carefully scanning the sides of the place with a small glass. "Originally natural, but this place has been worked."

"Worked? What, dug out?" said Bart. "Why, what for—to get water?"

"No," said the doctor, quietly; "to get silver. This has been a great mine."

"But who would have dug it?" said Bart, eagerly. "The Indians would not."

"The people who roughly made the zigzag way up to the top here, my boy."

"But what people would they be, sir? The Spaniards?"

"No, Bart, I should say this was dug by people who lived long before the Spaniards, perhaps thousands of years. It might have been done by the ancient peoples of Mexico, or those who built the great temples of Central America and Yucatan—those places so old that there is no tradition of the time when they were made. One thing is evident, that we have come upon a silver region that was known to the ancients."

"Well, I am disappointed!" cried Bart. "I thought, sir, that we had made quite a new find."

"So did I at first, Bart," replied the doctor. "But, at any rate, save to obtain a few scraps, the place

has not been touched, I should say, for centuries. And even if this mine has been pretty nearly exhausted, there is ample down below there in the canyon, while this mount must be our fortress and our place for furnaces and stores."

They descended cautiously for about a couple of hundred feet, sufficiently far for the doctor to chip a little at the walls, and find in one or two places veins that ran right into the solid mountain, and quite sufficient to give ample employment to all the men without touching the great lode in the crack of the canyon side. And this being so, they climbed back to meet Joses, who had been just about to descend after them.

"You'll both be killing of yourselves before you're done, boss," he said, roughly. "No man ought to go down a place like that without a rope round his waist well held at one end."

"Well, it would have been safer," said the doctor, smiling.

"Safer? Yes," growled Joses. "Send down a greaser next time; there's plenty of them, and they aren't much consequence. We could spare a few."

The doctor smiled, and, after continuing their journey round the edge of the old mine, they made their way to the zigzag descent, whose great regularity of contrivance plainly enough indicated that human hands had had something to do with it. Probably, when it was in use in the ancient ages, when some powerful nation had rule in the land, it might have been made easy of access by means of logs and balks of wood laid over the rifts from side to side.

The descent was almost more arduous than the ascent, but there was no danger save such as might result from a slip or wrench through placing a foot

in one of the awkward cracks. Once more down in the plain, where the camp was as busy as an ant hill, the doctor called his followers about his wagon, and formed a sort of council, as he proceeded to lay his plans before them.

The first was—as they were ready to defy the Indians, and to fight for their position there, to make the mountain their fortress. In spite of the laborious nature of the ascent, it was determined that the tents should be set up on the top, while further steps were taken to enlarge the interior of the opening as soon as the narrow entrance was passed, so as to allow of a party of men standing ready to defend the way against Indians who might force themselves in.

This was decided on at once, and men were told off to do the work.

Then it was proposed to build three or four stout walls across the sloping path, all but just room enough for a man to pass by. These would be admirable means of defense to fight behind, if the enemy forced their way in past the first entry, and with these and a larger and stronger barrier at the top of the slope by the first turn, it was considered by the doctor that with ordinary bravery the place would be impregnable.

So far so good; but then there were the horses and cattle, the former in the cavern-like stable, the latter in their stone walled corral.

Here was a difficulty, for now, however strong their defense might be, they were isolated, and it would be awkward in case of attack to have two small parties of men detailed for the guarding of these places, which the Indians would be sure to attack in force, in place of throwing their lives away against the well defended mountain path.

“Couldn’t we contrive a gallery along the face of

the mountain, right along above the ravine and the stables, sir?" said Bart. "I think some stones might be loosened out, and a broad ledge made, too high for the Indians to climb up, and with a good wall of stones along the edge we could easily defend the horses."

"A good idea, Bart, if it can be carried out," said the doctor. "Let's go and see!"

Inspection proved that this could easily be done so as to protect the horses, but not the corral, unless its position were altered, and it were placed close alongside of the cavern stable.

After so much trouble had been taken in rearing this wall it seemed a great pity, but the men willingly set to work with some loosened stones from above, and levered them down with bars, these fallen stones coming in handy for building up the wall.

Fineness of finish was not counted; a strong barrier which the cattle could not leap or throw down, if an attempt was made to scare them into a stampede, was all that was required, and so in a few days not only was this new corral strongly constructed, but the ledge projecting fifty feet above it in the side of the mountain had been excavated, and edged with a strong wall of rock.

There was but little room, only advantage was taken of holes in the rock, which were enlarged here and there so as to form a kind of rifle pit, in which there was plenty of space for a man to creep and kneel down to load and fire at any enemy who should have determined to carry off the cattle. In fine, they had at last a strong place of defense, only to be reached from a spot about a hundred feet up the sloping way to the summit of the mountain; and the road to and from it was free from observation if the defenders crept along on hands and knees,

Beneath the entrance to this narrow gallery a very strong wall was built nearly across the slope, and at Bart's suggestion a couple of huge stones were loosened in the wall just above, and a couple of crow-bars were left there ready to lower these still farther, so that they would slip down into the narrow opening left in case of emergency, and thus completely keep the Indians out.

All these matters took a great deal of time, but the knowledge of the danger from the prowling bands of Indians always on the war path on the plains, and also that of the large treasure in silver that was within their reach, made the men work like slaves.

Water had been found in a spring right at the top of the mountain, and after contriving a basin in the rock that it should fill, it was provided with an outlet, and literally led along a channel of silver down to where it could trickle along a rift, and then down by the side of the sloping paths to a rock basin dug and blasted out close to the entrance in the plain.

This was a good arrangement, for they were thus independent of the lake upon the plain, or the necessity for contriving a way down to the river in the canyon. Attention had then to be given to the food supply, and this matter was mentioned to the Beaver.

For Bart had suggested that no doubt the Indians would find buffalo for them, instead of passing their time playing the part of mounted scouts and herdsmen when the cattle were driven to feed down in the rich pastures by the lake.

The Beaver did not often smile, but when Bart tried to explain his wishes to him, that he should lead a little party out into the plains to shoot buffalo for the party, his stolid, warlike countenance began slowly to expand; there was a twinkle here and a crease there; his solemn, watchful eyes sparkled;

then they flashed, and at last a look of joy overspread his countenance, and he said a few words eagerly to the interpreter.

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth," began the latter slowly, "says that it is good, and that we will go and hunt bison, for it is men's work, while minding the grazing cattle here is only fit for squaws."

The Indians immediately began their preparations, which were marked by their brevity. Rifles and ammunition were examined, girths were tightened, and small portions of dried meat tied to the pad saddles ready for use if required, though it was hoped that a sufficiency of fresh meat would soon be obtained.

Bart and Joses were eager to join the hunting party, and the doctor's consent was readily given.

Then, amidst a ringing cheer from the little crowd of lookers on, the bison hunters went off at full speed over the sandy plain, making for the left of the lake. As Bart turned in his saddle to gaze back, the camp, with its round topped wagons, the flat mountain, and the faintly shown track up to its summit, looked like some beautiful panorama, above which the great flag blew out in the brisk breeze, and flapped and waved its folds merrily, as if flaunting defiance to every Indian on the plain.

But as Bart gazed up at the flag he could not help thinking what a mere scrap of colored cloth it was, and what a very little the Indians would think of it if they determined to come down and attack the camp in their might.

"Ease off a bit, Master Bart," cried Joses, after they had been riding at full gallop for a couple of miles over the plains. "Whoo-hoop, my Injun friends! Whoo-hoop!"

"Whoo-hoop! whoo-hoop! whoo-hoop!" yelled back the Indians, excitedly; and taking it as an incentive to renewed exertion, they pressed the flanks

of their horses, which responded freely, and they swept on more swiftly still.

"Tell Beaver to stop a bit," cried Joses; "you're nighest to him, my lad." And Bart was about to shout some words to the chief, who was on his other side, riding with eyes flashing with excitement, and every nerve on the throb, thoroughly enjoying the wild race after so long a time of inaction in the camp.

Bart shouted to the Beaver to check his pace, but he was misunderstood, and the party swept on, whooping with delight, for all the world like a pack of excited schoolboys just let loose for a holiday.

"We shall have our nags regularly blown, my lad," panted Joses, "and then if we come upon unfriendly Injuns it'll be the worse for us. Let you and me draw rein, then they'll stop."

But tug as they would at the bridle their animals could not be made to halt. They had the bits between their teeth and they flew on after the rest.

"It's no use to try, my lad; the horses won't stop and leave them others galloping on. You may train horses as much as you like, but there's a lot of nature left in them, and that you can't eddicate out."

"What do you mean?" panted Bart, for it was hard work to breathe while riding so fast.

"What do I mean, my boy? Why, these horses is used to going in big droves together, and this puts 'em in mind of it, and they like it. You try and pull Black Boy in. There, I told you so. See how he gnaws at his bit and pulls. There's no stopping him, my lad, no more than there is mine. Let 'em go, my lad. Perhaps we mayn't meet any one we don't want to meet, after all."

Hardly had he spoken before the Beaver raised his arm, and his followers pulled up as if by magic, forming in quite a small circle close to him, with their horses' heads almost touching him.

The Beaver signed to Bart and Joses to approach, and room was made for them to join in the little council which was to be held, and the result was that being now well out in the plains, far north of where they had originally traveled to reach the mountain, they headed off to the west, the Indians separating, and opening out more and more so as to cover wider ground with their keen eyes, while every little eminence was climbed so that the horizon could be swept in search of bison.

"Do you think we shall meet with any, Joses?" asked Bart.

"What, buffler, my lad? Well, I hope so. There's never no knowing, for they're queer beasts, and there's hundreds here today, and tomorrow you may ride miles and miles, and not see a hoof. Why, I've known times when I've come upon a drove that was miles long."

"Miles, Joses?"

"Yes, Master Bart; I've seen droves of 'em miles upon miles long, and if it wasn't for the wolves and the Injuns, there wouldn't be room for anything else."

"Are there so many as you say, Joses?" asked Bart.

"Not now, my lad. There used to be, but they've been killed down a deal. You see, the Injun lives on 'em a'most. He cuts up and dries the beef, and he makes himself buffler robes of the skins—and very nice warm things they are in cold parts up in the mountains. I don't know what the Injun would do if it wasn't for the buffler. He'd starve. Not as that would be so very much consequence, as far as some tribes goes—Comanches and Apaches, and them sort as lives by killing and murdering every one they sees. Halloa! what's that mean?"

He pulled up and shaded his eyes with his hand,

to gaze at where one of the Indians was evidently making some sign with his spear as he sat in a peculiar way, right on their extreme left, upon an eminence in the plain.

Bart looked eagerly on, so as to try and learn what this signal meant.

"Oh, I know," said Joses, directly, as he saw the Beaver make his horse circle round. "He can see a herd far out on the plain, and the Beaver has just signaled him back; so ride on, my lad, and we may perhaps come across a big run of the rough ones before the day is out."

CHAPTER XVI.

ALONE ON THE PLAINS.

JOSSES was wrong, for no sign was seen of buffalo that day, and thus the next morning, after a very primitive kind of camp out in the wilderness, the Beaver took them in quite a different direction, parallel to the camp, so as to be within range, for distance had to be remembered in providing meat for so large a company.

"You must keep your eyes well skinned, Master Bart," said Joses, with a grim smile, as they left the plain for an undulating country, full of depressions, most of which contained water, and whose gentle hills were covered with succulent buffalo grass. "If you don't, my lad, you may find yourself dropping down on to a herd of Apaches instead of buffaloes; and I can tell you, young fellow, that a buck Injun's a deal worse thing to deal with than a bull buffler. You must keep a sharp lookout."

"I'll do the best I can, Joses, you may be sure."

Just then the Beaver came cantering up to them, gently lying right down upon his horse.

"Jump off, Master Bart," cried Joses; "there's buffler in sight, and we don't want to scare 'em."

Setting the example, he slid from his horse and stood behind it, Bart imitating his acts, and they waited there till the Beaver came up and pointed toward an opening in the distance, where, for the moment, Bart could see nothing; but watching atten-

tively, he soon made out what seemed to be a dark patch moving slowly toward them.

By this time the Beaver had signaled his followers to approach, and after giving them some instructions, they all rode off together into a valley, the Beaver and his white companions following them, so that in a few minutes they were out of sight of the approaching herd of buffalo, which came steadily on in profound ignorance of there being enemies in their neighborhood.

The country was admirably adapted for a hunt, the ground being unincumbered by anything larger than a scrubby kind of brush, while its many shallow valleys gave the hunters ample opportunity for riding unseen until they had reached a favorable situation for their onslaught.

The Beaver was evidently a thorough expert in such a hunt as this, for he kept on dismounting and making observations, directing his followers here and there, and often approaching pretty near, then making retrograde movements, so as to bring them forward again in a more satisfactory position.

His last arrangement was to place his following in couples about a hundred yards apart, parallel with the line of march of the herd, which was still invisible to Bart, though on the other side of the ridge in whose valley he was sheltered he could hear a strange snorting noise every now and then, and a low angry bellow.

"We're to wait his signal, Master Bart, and then ride up the slope here, and go right at the buffler. Don't be afraid, my lad, but pick out the one you mean to have, and then stick to him till you've brought him down with a bullet right through his shoulder."

"I'll try not to be afraid, Joses," said Bart; "but I can't help feeling a bit excited."

"You wouldn't be good for much if you didn't, my boy," said the frontiersman. "Now, then, be ready. Is your rifle all right?"

"Yes."

"Mind then; ride close up to your bull, and as he gallops off you gallop too, till you reach out with your rifle in one hand and fire."

"But am I to ride right up to the herd, Joses?"

"To be sure you are, my boy. Don't you be afraid, I tell you. It's only getting over it the first time. Just you touch Black Boy with your heels, and he'll take you right in between a couple of the bulls, so that you can almost reach them on each side. Then you'll find they'll begin to edge off on both sides, and get farther and farther away, when, as I told you before, you must stick to one till you've got him down. Look out. Here we go!"

The Beaver had made a quick signal, and in a moment the hunting party began to ascend the slope leading to the ridge, beyond which Bart knew that the bison were feeding, and most probably in a similar depression to the one in which the horsemen had been hidden.

"Look out for yourself," said Joses, raising his rifle, and nerving himself for the encounter; and wondering whether he really was afraid or no, Bart pressed his little cob's sides with his heels, making it increase its pace, while he, the rider, determined to dash boldly into the herd just as he had been told.

At that moment Bart's courage had a severe trial, for it seemed as if by magic that a huge bull suddenly appeared before him, the monster having trotted heavily to the top of the ridge, exactly opposite to Bart; and not ten yards apart the young hunter and the bull stopped short to gaze at each other.

"What a monster!" thought Bart, bringing his rifle to bear upon the massive head, with the tremendous shoulders covered with long coarse shaggy hair, while the short curved horns and great glowing eyes gave the bull so ferocious an aspect that upon first acquaintance it was quite excusable that Bart's heart should quail and his hands tremble as he took aim, for the animal did not move.

Just then Bart remembered that Joses had warned him not to fire at the front of a bison.

"He'd carry away half a dozen balls, my lad, and only die miserably afterward in the plain. What you've got to do is to put a bullet in a good place and bring him down at once. That's good hunting. It saves powder and lead, makes sure of the meat, and don't hurt the buffler half so much."

So Bart did not fire, but sat there staring up at the bull, and the bull stood above him pawing the ground, snorting furiously, and preparing himself for a charge.

Truth must be told. If Bart had been left to himself on this his first meeting with a bison, especially as the beast looked so threatening, he would have turned and fled. But, as it happened, he was not left to himself, for Black Boy did not share his rider's tremor. He stood gazing warily up at the bull for a few moments, and then, having apparently made up his mind that there was not much cause for alarm, and that the bison was a good deal of a big bully without a great deal of bravery under his shaggy hide, he began to move slowly up the slope, taking his master with him, to Bart's horror and consternation.

"He'll charge at and roll us over and over down the slope," thought Bart, as he freed his feet from the stirrups, ready to leap off and avoid being crushed beneath his nag.

Nine yards—eight yards—six yards—closer and closer, and the bison did not charge. Then so near that the monster's eyes seemed to flame, and still nearer and nearer, with the great animal tossing its head, and making believe to lower it and tear up the earth with one horn.

"If he don't run we must," thought Bart at last, as Black Boy slowly and cautiously took him up to within a yard of the shaggy beast, whose bovine breath Bart could smell now as he tossed his head.

Then, all at once, the great fellow wheeled round and thundered down the slope, while, as if enjoying the discomfiture, Black Boy made a bound, cleared the ridge, and descended the other slope at full gallop close to the bison's heels.

All Bart's fear went in the breeze that swept by him. He felt ready to shout with excitement, for the valley before him seemed to be alive with bison, all going along at a heavy lumbering gallop, with Joses and the Indians in full pursuit, and all as much excited as he.

His instructions were to ride right in between two of the bison, single out one of them, and to keep to him till he dropped, and Bart saw nothing but the huge drove on ahead, with the monstrous bull whose acquaintance he had made thundering on between him and the main body.

"I must keep to him," thought Bart—"and I will tell I have shot him down. If I can," he added, a few minutes later, as he kept on in the exciting chase.

How long it lasted he could not tell, nor how far they went. All he knew was that after a long ride the bull nearly reached the main body; and, once mingled with them, Bart felt that he must lose him.

But this did not prove to be the case, for Black Boy had had too good a training with cattle driving.

No sooner did the bison plunge into the ranks of his fellows as they thundered on, than the gallant little horse made three or four bounds, and rushed close up to his haunch, touching him and the bison on his left, with the result that both of the shaggy monsters edged off a little, so that Bart was carried right in between them, and, as Joses had suggested, there was one moment when he could literally have kicked the animals on either side of his little horse.

That only lasted for a moment, though, for both of the bison continued to edge away, with the result that the opening grew wider and wider, while, remembering enough of his lesson, Bart kept close to the bull's flank, Black Boy never flinching for a moment. And at last the drove had scattered, so that the young hunter found himself almost alone on the plain, going at full speed beside his shaggy quarry, the rest of the herd having left him to his fate.

And now the bull began to grow daring, making short rushes at horse and rider, but they were of so clumsy a nature that Black Boy easily avoided them, closing in again in the most pertinacious manner upon the bull's flank as soon as the charge was ended.

Bart remembered that there was something else to be done, and that he was not to go on riding beside the bison, but to try and shoot it. Easier said than done, going at full gallop; but he brought his rifle to bear, and tried to get a good aim, but could not, for it seemed as if the muzzle was either jerked up towards the sky or depressed towards the ground.

He tried again and again, but could not make sure of a shot; so, checking his steed a little, he allowed the bison to get a few yards ahead, and then galloped forward till he was well on the right side,

where he could rest his rifle upon his horse's withers, and, waiting his time, get a good shot.

It might have been fired into the earth for all the effect it had, save to produce an angry charge, and it was the same with a couple more shots. Then, all at once, as Bart was reloading, the poor brute suddenly stood still, panting heavily, made an effort to charge the little horse, stopped, plowed up the earth with its right horn, and then shivered and fell over upon its flank—dead!

Bart leaped from his horse in his excitement, and, running to the bison, jumped upon its shaggy shoulder, took off his cap, waved it above his head, and uttered a loud cheer.

Then he looked round for some one to echo his cry, and he saw a widespread stretch of undulating prairie land, with some tufts of bush here, some tall grass there, and beneath his feet the huge game beast that he had fairly run down and shot, while close beside him Black Boy was recompensing himself for his long run by munching the coarse brown grass.

And that was all.

Where were the hundreds of buffalo that had been thundering over the plain?

Where was Joses?

Where were the Indians?

These were the questions Bart asked as he gazed around him in dismay, for the excitement of his gallop was over now, and, though they wanted meat so badly, he felt half sorry that he had shot the poor beast that lay stiffening by his side.

He realized that he was alone in that vast plain—that he had galloped on for a long while without noticing in which direction he had gone. Then, half stunned, he fully realized that he was lost.

If he fired his rifle or made a fire he might bring

down Indians upon him, and that would be worse than being lost, so he determined to wait patiently until he was able to see more of his party. No sooner had he come to this determination than he cheered up, for he recollected directly that the Beaver, or some one or other of his men would be sure to find him by his trail, even though it had been among the trampling hoof marks of the bison. The prints of a well shod horse would be unmistakable, and with this thought he grew more patient, and waited on.

It was towards evening, though, before he had the reward of his patience in seeing the figure of a mounted Indian in the distance; and even then it gave no comfort, as he felt sure that it might be an enemy, for it appeared to be in the very opposite direction from that in which he had come.

Bart's first idea was to go off at a gallop, only he did not know where to go, and after all this might be a friend.

Then another appeared, and another; and dismounting, and turning his horse and the bison into bulwarks, Bart stood with his rifle resting ready for a shot should these Indians prove to be enemies, and patiently awaited them as they came on.

This they did so quickly and full of confidence, that there was soon no doubt as to who they were, and Bart at last mounted again, and rode forward to meet them.

The Indians came on, waving their rifles above their heads, and no sooner did they catch sight of the prize the lad had shot than they gave a yell of delight; and then, forgetting their customary stolidity, they began to chatter to him volubly in their own tongue, as they flung themselves from their horses, and began to skin the bison as it lay.

They had not been at work above an hour before

a couple more Indians came into sight, and soon after, to his great delight, Bart recognized Joses and the Beaver coming slowly over a ridge in the distance, and he cantered off to meet them at once.

"Thought we lost you, Master Bart," cried Joses, with grim smile. "Well, how many bufflers did you shoot?"

"Only one," replied Bart, "but it was a very big fellow."

"Calf?" asked Joses, laughing.

"No; that great bull that came over the ridge."

"You don't mean to say that you ran him down, lad, and shot him, do you?" cried Joses, excitedly.

"There he lies, and the Indians are cutting him up," said Bart, quietly.

Joses pressed his horse's side with his heels, and went off at a gallop to inspect Bart's prize, coming back in a few minutes smiling all over his face.

"He's a fine one, my lad. He's a fine one, Master Bart—finest one shot today. I tell you what, my lad, if I had shot that bull I should have thought myself a lucky man."

As he spoke he pointed to the spot, and the Beaver cantered off to have his look, and he now came back ready to nod and say a few commendatory words to the younger hunter, whom they considered to have well won his spurs.

The result of the first encounter with the bison was that nine were slain, and for many hours to come the party were busy cutting up the meat into strips, which were hung in the sun to dry.

Then four of the Indians went slowly off towards the miners' camp at the mountain, their instructions being to come back with a couple of wagons, which Joses believed they would be able to fill next day.

"How far do you think we are from the camp?" asked Bart.

"'Bout fifteen miles or so; no more," replied Joses. "You see the run after the bison led us down towards it, so that there isn't so far to go."

"Why, I fancied that we were miles upon miles away," cried Bart; "regularly lost in the wilderness."

"Instead of being close at home, eh, lad? Well, we shall have to camp somewhere out here to-night, so we may as well pick out a good place."

"But where are the other Indians?" as Bart.

"Cutting up the buffler we killed," replied Joses.

"Far away?"

"Oh, no, mile or so. We've done pretty well, my lad, for the first day, only we want such a lot to fill so many mouths."

A suitable place was selected for the camp, down in a sheltered hollow, where a fire was lit, and some bison meat placed upon sticks to roast. The missing Indians seemed to be attracted by the odor, for just as it was done they all came straight up to camp ready to make a hearty meal, in which their white companions were in no wise behindhand.

"Not bad stuff," said Joses, after a long space, during which he had been too busy to speak.

"I never ate anything so delicious," replied Bart, who, on his side, was beginning to feel as if he had had enough.

"Ah, there's worse things than roast buffler hump," said Joses; "and now, my lad, if I was you I'd take as big and as long a sleep as I could, for we must be off again before daylight after the herd."

"Shall we catch up to them again, Joses?" asked Bart.

"Catch up to them? Why, of course, they haven't gone far."

A quarter of an hour later Bart was fast asleep, dreaming that he was hunting a bull bison ten times as big as the one he had that afternoon shot, and that after hunting it for hours it suddenly turned round and began to hunt him, till he became so tired that he lay down and went off fast asleep, when, to his great disgust, when he was so weary, Jose came and began to shake him by the shoulder, saying:

"Come, Master Bart, lad, wake up. The buffler's been coming close in to camp during the night."

It was nearly day, and Bart jumped up, astonished that he could have slept so long—that is to say, nearly since sundown on the previous evening.

A good fire was burning, and buffalo steaks were sizzling and spurting ready for their repast, while the horses were all standing together beneath a little bold bluff of land left sharp and clear by the action of a stream that doubtless flowed swiftly enough in flood time, but was merely a thread of water now.

The party were settling down to their meal, for which, in spite of the previous evening's performance, Bart felt quite ready, when the horses suddenly began to snort and show a disposition to make a stampede, for there was a rushing noise as of thunder. As the Indians rushed to their horses' heads, and Bart made for Black Boy, thinking that there must be a flood rolling down from the hills, he caught glimpses of what was amiss.

For he could see over the edge of the scarped bank beneath which they had made their fire, that the plain was literally alive with bison, which, in some mad fit of dread, were in headlong flight, and their course would bring them right over the spot where the party was encamped.

The Beaver saw it, and, prompt in action, he made

his plans. Signing to several to come to his side, while the rest held the horses, he leaped upon the edge of the stream just as the bison were within a hundred yards, and Bart and Joses followed him. Then, as the huge herd was about to sweep over them, they uttered a tremendous shout, and all fired together right in the center of the charging herd.

Bart set his teeth, feeling sure that he would be run down and trampled to death, but the effect of the sudden and bold attack was to make the herd separate. It was but a mere trifle, for the bison were so packed together that their movements were to a great extent governed by those behind. But still they did deviate a little, those of the front rank swerving in two bodies to right and left, and that saved the little party.

Bart had a sort of confused idea of being almost crushed by shaggy quarters, of being in the midst of a sea of tossing horns and dark hair, with lurid eyes glaring at him; then the drove was sweeping on, some leaping down into the stream bed and climbing up the opposite side, others literally tumbling down headlong, to be trampled upon by those which followed. Then the rushing noise began to die away, for the herd had swept on. They had left a couple of their number shot dead by the discharge of rifles, and lying in the river, while another had fallen a few hundred yards farther on in the track of the flight.

Fortunately the horses had been held so closely up to the bluff that they had escaped, though several of the bison had been forced by their companions to the edge, and had taken the leap, some ten feet, into the river bed below.

The worst part of the adventure revealed itself to Bart a few moments later when he turned to look

for Joses, whom he found rubbing his head wofully beside the traces of their fire, over which the bison had gone in enormous numbers, with the result that the embers had been scattered, and every scrap of the delicious meat trampled into the sand.

"Never mind, Joses!" cried Bart, bursting out laughing, "there's plenty more meat cut up."

"Plenty more!" growled Joses; "and that all so nicely done! As if there wasn't room enough anywhere else on the plain without their coming right over us!"

"What does the Beaver mean?" cried Bart just then, noticing that the chief was talking excitedly with his warriors.

"Mean? Yes; I might have known as much. He thinks there's Injuns somewhere—that they have been hunting the buffler and made 'em stampede. We shall have to be off, my lad. No breakfast this morning."

It was as Joses said. The Beaver was of opinion that enemies must be near at hand, so he sent out scouts to feel for the danger, and no fire could be lighted lest it should betray their whereabouts to a watchful foe.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE CANYON.

A LONG period of crouching down in the stream bed ensued, and as Bart waited he could not help thinking that their hiding place in the plain was, as it were, a beginning of a canyon like that by the mountain, and might, in the course of thousands of years, be cut down by the action of flowing water till it was as wide and deep.

At last, first one and then another scout came in, unable to find a trace of enemies; and, thus encouraged, a fire was once more made and meat cooked, while the three bison slain that morning were skinned and their better portions cut away.

The sun was streaming down with all its might as they once more went off over the plain in search of the herd; and this search was soon rewarded, the party separating, leaving Bart and Joses together to ride after a smaller herd about a mile to their left.

As they rode nearer, to Bart's great surprise, the herd did not take flight, but huddled together, with a number of bulls facing outwards, presenting their horns to the enemies, tossing and shaking their shaggy heads and pawing up the ground.

"Why don't they rush off, Joses?" asked Bart.

"Got cows and calves inside there, my boy," replied the frontiersman. "They can't go fast, so the bulls have stopped to take care of them."

"Then it would be a shame to shoot them!" cried Bart. "Why, they are braver than I thought for."

"Not they," laughed Joses. "Not much pluck in a bison, my lad, that I ever see. Why, you might walk straight up to them if you liked, and they'd never charge you."

"I shouldn't like to try them," said Bart, laughing.

"Why not, my lad?"

"Why not? Do you suppose I want to be trampled down and tossed?"

"Look here, Master Bart. You'll trust me, won't you?"

"Yes, Joses."

"You know I wouldn't send you into danger, don't you?"

"Of course, Joses."

"Then look here, my lad. I'm going to give you a lesson if you'll learn it."

"Very well, go on; I'm listening. I want to learn all I can about them," replied Bart, as he kept on closely watching the great fierce, fiery eyed bison bulls as they stamped and snorted and pawed the ground, and kept making feints of dashing at their approaching enemies, who rode towards them at a good pace.

"I don't want you to listen, my lad," said Joses; "I want you to get down and walk right up to the buffler bulls there and try and lay hold of their horns."

"But they would charge me, Joses," said Bart uneasily.

"Did I tell you right about 'em before," said Joses, "or did I tell you wrong, my lad?"

"You told me right; but you might be wrong about them here."

"You let me alone for that," replied Joses, gruffly. "I know what I am saying. Now, then, will you get down and walk up to 'em, or must I?"

For answer, Bart slipped off his horse and cocked his rifle.

"Don't shoot till they're turning round, my lad," said Joses; "and then give it to that big young bull in the middle there. He's a fine one, and we must have meat for the camp."

"But it seems a pity; he looks such a brave young fellow," said Bart.

"Never mind; shoot him. All the other bulls will be precious glad, for he's the tyrant of the herd, and leads them a pretty life. Now then, on you go."

They were now some sixty yards from the herd, and no sooner did Bart take a step forward than Joses leaped lightly from his horse and rested his rifle over the saddle ready for a sure shot when he should see his chance.

Bart tried to put on a bold front, but he felt very nervous and walked cautiously toward the herd, where ten or a dozen bulls faced him, and now seemed to be furious, snorting and stamping with rage.

But he walked on, gaining courage as he went; but ere he had gone half a dozen steps six of the bulls made a headlong charge at him, and Bart stood still, ready to fire.

"How stupid I was!" he said to himself. "They'll go right over me;" and with his heart beating heavily, he felt that he must turn and run.

"Go on, my lad, go!" shouted Joses, encouragingly; and, in spite of himself, and as if bound to obey orders, the lad took a step forward again, when, to his utter amazement, the bison bulls, now not twenty yards away, stopped short, shook their heads

at him, made some impotent tosses in the air, pawed up a little grass, and then turned altogether, and trotted back to take up their old position in front of the herd.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Joses behind him. "What did I tell you? Go on, my lad; you've got more heart than a bison."

This emboldened Bart, who went steadily on, reducing the distance between him and the herd; and it was a curious sensation which came upon the lad as he walked nearer and nearer to the furious looking beasts.

Then his heart gave a tremendous throb, and seemed to stand still, for, without warning, and moved as if by one impulse, the bison charged again, but this time not half the distance; and as Bart did not run from them, they evidently thought that some one ought to flee, so they galloped back.

Bart was encouraged now, and began to feel plenty of contempt for the monsters, and, walking more swiftly, the beasts charged twice more, the last time only about the length of their bodies, and this was when Bart was so near that he could almost feel their hot moist breath.

This was the last charge, for as they turned the leading bull evidently communicated his opinion that the young visitor was a stupid kind of being, whom it was impossible to frighten, and the whole herd set off at a lumbering gallop; but as they did so two rifle shots rang out, and two bulls hung back a little, evidently wounded.

Joses led up Bart's horse as the lad reloaded, and put the rein in his hand.

"There, off after your own bull, my lad! It was bravely done. I'm off after mine."

Then they separated, and after a short gallop Bart reached his quarry, and, better able now to manage

his task, he rode up on its right side, and a well placed bullet tumbled the monstrous creature over on the plain, dead.

Joses had to give two shots before he disabled his own bison, but the run was very short: and when Bart and he looked round they were not above a couple of hundred yards apart, and the Beaver and a couple of Indians were cantering toward them.

That evening their messengers returned with a couple of the white men and two wagons, which were taken in triumph next morning to the camp, heavily laden with bison meat. As they came near the mountain Bart drew rein to stay and watch the curious sight before him. Evidently in pursuance of the doctor's idea to make the top of the mountain the stronghold of the silver adventurers, there was quite a crowd of the people toiling up the path on the mountain, all laden with packages and the various stores that had been brought for the adventure.

"Been pretty busy since we've been gone, Master Bart," said Joses, grimly. "Won't they come scuffling down again when they know there's meat ready for sharing out!"

But Joses was wrong, for the meat was not shared out down in the plain, but a second relay of busy hands was set to work to carry the store of fresh food right up the mountain side to a tent that had already been pitched on the level top, while as soon as the wagons were emptied they were drawn up in rank along with the others close beneath the wall of rock.

The doctor had not lost any time. Tents had been set up, and men were busy raising sheds of rough stone which were to be roofed over with poles. But at the same time he had had men toiling away in opening up a rift that promised to yield silver pretty bounteously, for the ancient mine seemed hardly a

place now, being dangerous, and the principal parts that were easy of access apparently were pretty well worked out.

This was something of a disappointment, but a trifling one, for the mountain teemed with silver, and then there was the canyon to explore.

This the doctor proposed to examine on the day following Bart's return, for the services of the chief would be required to find a way down, unless the descent was to be made by ropes.

The Beaver and his interpreter were brought to the doctor's tent, and the matter being explained, the Indian smiled and expressed his willingness to show them at once; so, a few preparations having been made, and some provisions packed in case the journey should prove long, Bart, the doctor, Joses, and the interpreter started, leaving the Beaver in front to lead the way.

He started off in a line parallel to the canyon, as it seemed to Bart, and made for a patch of good sized trees about half a mile from the mountain. Upon reaching this they found that the great river chasm had curved around, so that it was not above a hundred yards away, and Bart began to think that perhaps it would not prove to be so precipitous there.

The Beaver, seeing his eagerness, smiled and nodded, and thrusting the bushes aside, he entered the patch of dense forest, which was apparently about half a mile in length, running with a breadth of half that distance along the edge of the canyon.

The interpreter followed, and after a few minutes they returned to say that no progress could be made in that direction, so they re-entered the forest some fifty yards lower, and where it looked less promising than before.

The chief, however, seemed to be satisfied, and, drawing his knife, he hacked and chopped at the pro-

jecting vines and thorns so as to clear a way for those who followed; till, after winding in and out for some time, he came at length to what seemed little more than a crack in the ground about a yard wide, and pretty well choked up with various kinds of growth.

At the first glance it seemed impossible for any one to descend into this rift, but the interpreter showed them that it was possible by leaping down, and directly after there was a loud, rattling noise, and an extremely large rattlesnake glided out of the rift on to the level ground. It was making its escape, when a sharp blow from the chief's knife divided it nearly in two, and he finished his task by crushing its head with the butt of his rifle.

"We must be on the lookout, Bart," said the doctor, "if these reptiles are in any quantity;" and as the Beaver leaped down he followed, then came Bart, and Joses closed up the rear.

"I shall get all the serpents," he grumbled. "You people will disturb them all, and they'll do their stinging upon me."

Then the descent became so toilsome that conversation ceased, and nothing was heard but the crackling of twigs, the breaking off of branches, and the sharp rustling noise that followed as the travelers forced their way through the bushes.

This lasted for about fifty yards, and then the descent became very rapid, and the trees larger and less crowded together. The rift widened, too, at times, but only to contract again; and then its sides so nearly approached that their path became terribly obscure, and without so energetic a guide as they possessed it would have required a stout hearted man to proceed.

Every here and there they had to slide down the rock perhaps forty or fifty feet; then there would be

a careful picking of the way over some rugged stones, and then another slide down for a while.

Once or twice it seemed as if they had come to a full stop, the rift being closed up by fallen masses of earth and stones; but the Beaver mounted these boldly, as if he knew of their existence, and lowered himself gently down the other side, waiting to help the doctor, for Bart laughingly declined, preferring as he did to leap from stone to stone, and swing himself over cracks that seemed almost impassable.

"This is nature's work, Bart," the doctor said, as he paused to wipe his streaming face. "No former inhabitants ever made this. It is an earthquake split, I should say."

"But it might be easily made into a good path, sir," said Bart.

"It might be made, Bart, but not easily, and it would require a great deal of engineering to do it. How dark it grows! You see, nothing hardly can grow down here except these mosses and little fungi."

"Is it much farther, sir?" cried Bart.

"What! are you tired, my lad?"

"No, sir; not I. Only it seems as if we must be near the bottom of the canyon."

"No, not yet," said the Beaver in good English, and both the doctor and Bart smiled, while the chief seemed pleased at his advance in the English tongue being noticed. "Long down—long down," he said in continuation.

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth tells the white chief and the little boy chief that it is far yet to the bottom of the way to the rushing river of the mountain," said the interpreter. Bart felt as if he should like to kick him for calling him a "little boy chief;" but the stoical Indian calmly and indifferently allowed the angry looks he received to pass, and fol-

lowed the party down as they laboriously stepped from stone to stone.

"There's a pretty good flush o' water here in rainy times, boss," said Joses. "See how all the earth has been washed out. Shouldn't wonder if you found gold here."

"I ought to have thought of that, Joses," replied the doctor, as he proceeded to examine the crevices of the rock over which he was walking as well as he could for the gloom and obscurity of the place, and at the end of five minutes he uttered a cry of joy. "Here it is!" he exclaimed, holding up two or three rounded nodules of metal. "No; I am wrong;" he said. "This light deceives me; it is silver."

To his surprise the Beaver took them from his hand with a gesture of contempt, and threw the pieces away, though they would have purchased him a new blanket or an ample supply of ammunition at Lerisco or any other southern town.

"Wait," he said, airing his English once more. "Plenty! plenty!" and he pointed down toward the lower part of the narrow crevice or crack in the rock along which they were passing.

"Go on, then," said the doctor, and once more they continued their descent, which grew more difficult moment by moment, and more dark and wild and strange,

At last there came a pleasant rushing sound, which Bart knew must be that of the river. Then there was the loud song of a bird, which floated up from far below, and then all at once a pale light appeared on the side of the rocks, which were now so near together that the sides in places nearly touched above their heads.

Five minutes' more arduous descent, and there was glistening wet moss on the rocks, and the light was stronger, while the next minute the pure, clear

light of day flashed up from an opening that seemed almost at their feet—an opening that was almost carpeted with verdant green, upon which, after dropping from a rock some ten feet high, they stood, pausing beneath an arch of interweaving boughs that almost hid the entrance to the rift, and there they stood, almost enraptured by the beauty of the scene.

For the bottom of the canyon had been reached, and its mighty walls rose up sheer above their heads, appearing to narrow towards the top, though this was an optical delusion. All was bright and glorious in the sunshine. The trees and shrubs were of a vivid green, the grass was brilliant with flowers; and running in serpentine waves through the middle of the lovely prairie that softly sloped down to it on either side, and whose sedges and clumps of trees dipped their tips in its sparkling waters, was the river, dancing and foaming here over its rocky bed, there swirling round and forming deep pools, while in its clear waters, as they approached, Bart could see the glancing scales of innumerable fish on its sun illumined shallows.

Hot and weary with their descent, the first act of all present was to dip their cups into the pure clear water. As soon as their feverish thirst was allayed, the doctor proceeded to test the sand of the river to see if it contained gold, while Bart, after wondering why a man who had discovered a silver mine of immense wealth could not be satisfied, went wandering off along the edge of the river, longing for some means of capturing the fish, whose silver scales flashed in the sunshine.

Sometimes he was able to leap from rock to rock that stood out of the river bed, and formed a series of barriers, around which the swift stream fretted and boiled, rushing between them in a series of cascades; and wherever one of these masses of water

worn stone lay in the midst of the rapid stream, Bart found that there was always a deep, still, transparent pool behind; and he had only to approach softly, and bend down or lie upon his chest, with his head beyond the edge, to see that this pool was the home of some splendid fish, a very tyrant that was ready to pounce upon everything that was swept into the still water.

"I wish we were not bothering about gold and silver," thought Bart.

He had rambled down the river so rapt in the beauties around him that he forgot all about the doctor and his search for the precious metals. All at once, as he was seated out upon a mass of stone by the river side, it struck him that it would be very pleasant to wade across a shallow to where a reef of rocks stood out of the water, so placed that as soon as he reached them he could leap from one to the other and settle himself down almost in the very middle of the river. There he determined to wait his chance and see if he could not shoot two or three of the largest trout for their meal that night.

The plan was no sooner thought of than Bart proceeded to put it in execution.

He waded the shallow pretty easily, though he could not help wondering at the manner in which his feet sank down into the soft sand, which seemed to let them in right up to the knees at once, and then to close so tightly round them that he seemed to have been thrusting his legs into leaden boots. However, he dragged them out, reached the first rock of the barrier or reef, and stood for a few minutes enjoying the beauty of the scene, while the stream rushed by on either side with tremendous force.

The next stone was a good five feet away, with a deep glassy flood rushing around. Bart leaped over

it, landed safely, and found the next rock quite six feet distant, and a good deal higher than the one he was upon.

He paused for a moment or two to think what would be the consequences if he did not reach this stone, and judged that it meant a good ducking and a swim to one of the shallows below.

"But I should get my rifle and cartridges wet," he said aloud, "and that would never do. Shall I? Shan't I?"

Bart's answer was to gather himself up and leap, with the result that he just reached the edge of the rock, and throwing himself forward managed to hold on, and then scramble up in safety.

"Going back 's easy enough," thought Bart, as he prepared to bound to the next rock, a long mass, like the back of some monstrous alligator, just rising above the flood. Along this he walked seven or eight yards, jumped from block to block of a dozen more rugged pieces, and then bounded upon a rough semicircular piece that ended the ridgelike a bastion, beyond which the water ran deep and swift.

"This is grand!" cried Bart, whose eyes flashed with pleasure; and settling himself down in a comfortable position, he laid his rifle across his knees with the intention of watching the fish in a shallow just above him, but only to forget all about them directly after, as he sat enjoying the beauties of the scene, and wished that his sisterly companion Maude were there to see how wonderfully grand their mother Nature could be.

"If there were no Indians," thought Bart, "and a good large town close by, what a lovely place this would be for a house! I could find a splendid spot; and then one could hunt on the plains, and shoot and fish, and the doctor could find silver and gold, and—good gracious! What's that?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

BART laid down his rifle as he uttered this exclamation, and, shading his eyes, gazed before him up the river.

For as he had been dreamily gazing before him at the shallow where the water ran over a bed of the purest sand for about a hundred yards, it seemed to him that he had seen a dark something roll over, and then for a moment a hand appear above the water, or else it was the ragged leaf of some great water plant washed out from its place of growth in the bank.

"It looks like—it must be—it is!" cried Bart. "Somebody has fallen in, and is drowning!"

As he thought this a chill feeling of horror seemed to rob him of his power of motion. And now, as he gazed at the glittering water with starting eyes, he knew that there was no mistake—it was no fancy, for there was a body being rolled over and over by the stream, now catching, now sweeping along swiftly, and nearer and nearer to where the lad crouched,

The water before him was shallow enough, and all clear sand. Without hesitation, Bart lowered himself down from the rock, stepped on to the sand with the water now to his knees, and was then about to wade towards the body, when he turned sharply and clutched the rough surface of the rock, cling-

ing tightly; and after a deep struggle managed to clamber back, panting, and with the perspiration in great drops upon his brow.

He knew now what he had only partly realized before, and that was the fact that these beautiful smooth sands, over which the swift current pleasantly glided, were quicksands of the most deadly kind, and that if he had not struggled back there would have been no chance of escape. Another step would have been fatal, and he must have gone down, for no swimming could avail in such a strait.

But Bart, in spite of the shock of his narrow escape, had not forgotten the object for which he had lowered himself from the rock, and gazing eagerly towards the shallows, he saw that it was just being swept off them into the deep water that rushed round the buttress upon which he stood.

It was the work of a moment. Reaching out as far as he could, he just managed to grip the clinging garment of the object sweeping by. He held on fiercely, and before he could fully comprehend his position he found that he had overbalanced himself, and the next moment he had gone under with a sullen plunge!

Bart was a good swimmer, and though incumbered with his clothes, he felt no fear of reaching the bank somewhere lower down. Confident in this respect, he looked round as he rose to the surface for the body of him he had tried to save, for as he struck the water he had loosened his hold.

There was just a glimmer of something below the surface, and, taking a couple of sturdy strokes, Bart reached it before it sank lower, caught hold, and then, guiding his burden, struck out for the shore.

The rocks from which he had come were already

a hundred yards above them, the stream sweeping them down with incredible swiftness, and Bart knew that it would be folly to do more than go with it, striving gently the while to guide his course towards some projecting rocks upon the bank. After fighting hard to get a hold upon a piece of smooth stone that promised well, but from which he literally seemed to be plucked by the rushing water, Bart found himself in a deep, still pool, round which he was swept twice, and, to his horror, nearer each time towards the center, where, with an agonizing pang, he felt that he might be sucked down.

Dreading this, he made a desperate effort, and once more reached the very edge of the great, calm, swirling pool just as the bushes on the bank were parted with a low rush, and the Beaver literally bounded into the water. When, faint and exhausted, they all reached a shallow rocky portion of the stream a quarter of a mile below where Bart had made his plunge, the chief was ready to lift out the object the lad had tried to save, and then hold out his hand and help the lad ashore.

The next minute they were trying to resuscitate him whom Bart had nearly lost his life in trying to save, and who was none other than Dr. Lascelles.

As they worked, the interpreter told Bart how the accident had occurred.

While the speaker and the chief had been collecting sticks for a fire to roast a salmon they had speared with a sharp forked stick, they had seen the doctor busily rinsing the sand in the shallow pool of the rocks, well out, where the stream ran fast. They had not anticipated danger, and were busy over their preparations, when, looking up they found the doctor had gone.

Even then they did not think there was anything wrong, believing that while they were busy their

leader had gone to some other part among the rocks, till, happening to glance down the stream some minutes later, the Beaver's quick eyes had caught sight of the bright tin bowl which the doctor had been using to rinse the sand in his hunt for gold, floating on the surface a hundred yards below, and slowly sailing round and round in an eddy.

This started them in search of the drowning man, with the result that they reached Bart in time to save both.

For after a long and arduous task the doctor began to show signs of life, and at last opened his eyes and stared about him like one who had just awakened from a dream.

"What—what has happened, eh?" he asked. "Did—did I slip from the rocks, or have I been asleep?"

He shuddered, and struggled into a sitting position; then, thoroughly comprehending after a few minutes what had passed,

"Who saved me?" he said, quickly.

The Beaver seemed to understand the drift of the question, for he pointed with a smile to Bart.

"You?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Oh, I did nothing," said Bart, modestly. "I saw you floating down towards me, and tried to pull you on a rock; instead of doing which you pulled me in, and we swam down together till I got near the shore, and then I could do no more. It was the Beaver there who saved us."

The doctor rose and grasped the chief's hand, wringing it warmly.

"Where's Joses?" he said, sharply.

No one knew.

"Let us go back," said the doctor; "perhaps we may meet him higher up;" and looking faint and ut-

terly exhausted, he followed the two Indians. The doctor's words proved to be right, for they came upon Joses toiling down towards the passage leading to the plain, with six heavy fish hanging from a tough wand thrust through the gills.

They reached the chimney, as Bart christened it, just about the same time as Joses, who stared as he caught sight of the saturated clothes.

"What! been in after the fish?" he said with a chuckle. "I got mine without being wet."

"We've had a narrow escape from drowning, Joses," said the doctor, hoarsely.

"That's bad, boss, that's bad," cried Joses. "It all comes of my going away and leaving you and Master Bart there; but I thought a few o' these salmon chaps would be good eating, so I went and snared 'em out with a bit o' wire and a pole."

"I shall soon be better, Joses," replied the doctor. "The accident would have happened all the same whether you had been there or not. Let us get back to the camp."

"Are we going to leave these beautiful fish the Beaver and old Speechworks here have caught and cooked?" asked Joses, regretfully.

"No," said the doctor, sinking down upon a stone, "let us rest and eat them. We shall not hurt out here in this bright sunshine, Bart, and we'll wring some of the water out of our clothes and have less weight to carry."

This speech gave the greatest of satisfaction, for the party were ravenously hungry, and the halt was not long enough to do any one hurt, for the broiled salmon was rapidly eaten. Then they started, and after a rather toilsome climb, ascended once more to the level of the plain, and reaching the wagons learned that all was well before proceeding to the doctor's quarters at the top of the mountain.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BEAVER SNIFFS DANGER.

"THERE'S something wrong, Master Bart," said Joses that evening, as Bart, rejoicing in the luxury of well dried clothes, sat enjoying the beauty of the setting sun, and thinking of the glories of the canyon.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because the Beaver's so busy."

"What is he doing?"

"All sorts of things. He hasn't said anything, but I can see by his way that he sniffs danger somewhere. He's getting all the horses into the cavern stable, and making his men drive all the cattle into the corral, and that means there's something wrong as sure as can be. Injuns smell danger long before it comes. There's no deceiving them."

"Let's go and see him, Joses," cried Bart; and, shouldering their rifles, they walked past the drawn up rows of empty wagons, whose stores were all high up on the mountain.

As they reached the entrance to the corral the Indians had driven in the last pair of oxen, while the horses and mules were already in their hiding place.

"Did the doctor order this?" asked Bart.

"Not he, sir; he's busy up above looking at the

silver they dug out while we were down in the canyon. It's all the Beaver's doings, Master Bart, and you may take it for granted there's good cause for it all."

"Ah, Beaver," said Bart, as the chief came out of the corral, "why is this?"

"Indian dog, Apache," said the chief, pointing out towards the plain.

Bart turned sharply round, and gazed in the indicated direction, but he could see nothing, neither could Joses.

The Beaver smiled with a look of superior wisdom.

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth," said the interpreter, coming up, "hears the Indian dog, the enemies of his race, on the wind."

"But where are the Apaches?" cried Bart. "Oh, he means, Joses, that they are out upon the plain, and that it is wise to be ready for them."

"Yes; he means that they are out upon the plain, and that they are coming tonight, my lad," said Joses. Then, turning to the chief, he patted the lock of his rifle meaningly, and the chief nodded and said "Yes."

Then he led the frontiersman and Bart to the entrance of the stable, where his followers were putting the last stones in position. Then he took them to the corral, which was also thoroughly well secured with huge stones; and the Indians now took up their rifles, and resuming their ordinary somber manner, stood staring indifferently about them.

Just then there was a loud hail, and turning quickly round, Bart saw the doctor waving his hand to them to join him.

"Indians are on the plains," exclaimed the doctor. "I saw them from the top of the castle"—he had taken to calling the mountain rock "the

castle"—"with the glass. They are many miles away, but they may be enemies, and we must be prepared. Get the horses secured, Joses; and you, interpreter, ask the Beaver to see to the cattle."

"All safely shut in, sir," said Bart, showing his teeth; "the Beaver felt that there was danger an hour ago, and everything has been done."

"Capital!" cried the doctor; "but how could he tell?"

"That's the mystery," replied Bart; "but he said there were Indian dogs away yonder on the plains."

"Indian dog, Apache," said the Beaver, scowling, and pointing towards the plain.

"Yes, that's where they are," said the doctor, nodding; "he is quite right, and this being so, we must get up into our castle and man the walls. Let me see first if all is safe."

He walked to both entrances, and satisfied himself, saying:

"Yes; they could not be better; but, of course, all depends upon our covering them from above with our rifles, for the Apaches could pull those rocks down as easily as we put them there. Now, then, let us go up; the wagons are fortunately empty enough."

The doctor led the way, pausing, however, to mount a wagon and take a good look out into the plain, which he swept with his glass, but only to close it with a look of surprise.

"I can see nothing from here," he said, "but we may as well be safe;" and entering the slit in the rock they called the gateway, he drew aside for the last few "greasers," who had been tending the cattle, to mount before him; then Joses, Bart, the Beaver, and his followers came in. The strong stones

kept for the purpose were hauled into place, and the entry thoroughly blocked; after which the various points of defense were manned, the doctor with several of the company taking the passage and the gate, while the Beaver, with Joses, Bart, and the Indians, were sent to man the ramparts—that is to say, the ingeniously contrived gallery that overlooked the stable cavern and the great corral.

“You must not spare your powder if the cattle are in danger,” said the doctor for his last orders. “I don’t want to shed blood, but these savages must have another severe lesson if they mean to annoy us. All I ask is to be let alone.”

Bart led the way, and soon after was ensconced in his rifle pit, with Joses on one side, and the Beaver on the other, the rest of the party being carefully arranged. Then the doctor spread the alarm up above, and the men armed and manned the zigzag way, but all out of sight; and at last, just as it was growing dark, the great plain fortress looked as silent as if there was not a man anywhere upon its heights, and yet in their various hiding places there were scores, each with his deadly rifle ready to send a return bullet for every one fired by any enemy.

“No firing unless absolutely necessary,” was the doctor’s whispered order, and then all was silent, while they waited to see if any enemy would really come.

They were not long kept in doubt, for just as the heavens had assumed that peculiar rich gray tint that precedes darkness, and a soft white mist was rising from the depths of the canyon, there was seen, as if arising from out of the plain itself, a dark body moving rapidly, and this soon developed itself into a strong band of Indians, all well mounted, their heads decked with feathers, and each armed with rifle and spear.

They were in their war paint, but still they might be disposed to be friendly; and the doctor was willing to believe it till he saw through his glass that they wore the skull and crossbones painted in white upon their broad, brown chests, and he knew that they were of the same tribe as had visited them before, and gone off after so severe a lesson.

Still he hoped that they might be friendly, and he was determined that they should not be fired upon without good reason.

A few minutes later he changed his opinion, for, evidently well drilled by their chief, the Indians charged towards where the tilted wagons were drawn up in the shade of the rock, riding with as much precision as a well drilled body of cavalry. Then, at a sign, they drew rein in a couple of ranks, about fifty yards from the wagons, and presenting their rifles, without word of warning fired a volley.

Another volley followed, and another, the thick smoke rising on the evening air, and then, apparently surprised at there being no replying shot, about twenty galloped up with lowered spears, thrust two or three times through the canvas tilts and galloped back, the whole band sweeping off the next moment as swiftly and as silently as they came, gradually becoming fainter and more shadowy, and then quite disappearing from the watchers' sight.

"They're gone, then?" whispered Bart, drawing a breath of relief.

"Yes; they're a bit scared by the silence," said Joses; "but they'll come back again."

"When?" said Bart.

"Sneaking about in the dark, to stampede the horses and cattle, as soon as ever they know where they are, my boy."

"Yes—come back." said the Beaver, in a low tone, and he whispered then to the interpreter.

"Apache dogs will come back in the night when the moon is up," said the interpreter. "They will steal up to the camp like wolves, and die like dogs and wolves, for they shall not have the horses and oxen."

And just then the Beaver, who seemed to comprehend his follower's English, said softly, "It is good."

The hours went by, but no sound or sign came from the plain; the stars started out bright and clear, and in the east there was a faint lambent light that told of the coming of the moon ere long, but still all seemed silent in the desert.

The men seemed to grow weary, and began talking so loudly that the doctor sent stern messages to them to be silent; and once more all was still, save when some one fidgeted about to change his position.

"Why can't they keep still?" growled Joses, softly, as he lay perfectly motionless, listening to every sound. "They don't understand how a man's life—aye, all our lives—may depend on their being still. Look at them Injuns. They never move."

Joses was quite right. Each Indian had taken his place where appointed, and had not moved since, saving to settle down into a part of the rock. The swarthy, muscular fellows might have been part of the stone for any sign they gave of life.

At last the moon rose slowly above the edge of the vast plain, sending a flood of light to bring into prominence every bush and tree, striking on the face of the mountain, and casting its shadow right away over the plain. From where Bart crouched he could not see the moon, but there was the heavy shadow of the mountain stretching to an enormous distance; and as he watched it, he could not help thinking how easily the Indians might creep right

up to them and make a bold assault, and this idea he whispered to Joses.

"There's no tellin' when they'll come, my lad," replied the frontiersman. "They'll crawl through the grass and from stone to stone in the dark there, and who's to see them? My eyes are sharp enough, but I don't know as I should see them coming. Let's ask the Beaver what he says."

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth has heard all you said," whispered the interpreter, "and he says that the Apaches will come before long to find their way into the camp, and then they will go away again if they do not die."

A curious silence seemed to fall after this, and Bart felt as he crouched there watching the plains that something very terrible was going to happen ere long. At another time he would have been drowsy, but now sleep was the last thing of which he thought, all his nerves being overwrought; and as his eyes swept the wide, flat plain, he kept on fancying that sooner or later he would see the Apaches coming up to them with the slow, silent approach of so many shadows.

And now it suddenly struck Bart that the shadow of the mountain was shorter than when the moon first rose, and that its edges were more boldly defined, and by this he knew, of course, that the moon was getting higher. At the same time, though, soft, fleecy clouds began to hide the stars, and at times the shadow of the mountain was blotted out, for the moon was from time to time obscured, and the peculiar indistinctness of the earth seemed to Bart as exactly suited for an enemy's approach. A slight movement at his side told him that this was the Indians' idea as well, and that to a man they were eagerly scanning the plain and the rugged patches of rock beneath.

Every here and there the fallen masses were piled up into buttresses, and it was amongst these that, after failing to keep his attention upon the misty plain, Bart let his gaze wander till at last he became convinced that he could see some dark patch in slow motion, and it was long enough before he could satisfy himself that it was only a stone.

He was deceived in this way so often—the various little prominences below him seeming to waver and move, and assume form in accordance with his ideas—that he grew tired of watching, feeling sure at last that there would be nothing to trouble them that night, when suddenly a soft, firm hand glided gently and silently as a snake to his wrist, took firm hold of it and pressed it, before rising and pointing down below them into the plain.

Bart followed the direction of the pointing hand, but he could see nothing, and he was about to say so, when, gradually sweeping past, a few light clouds must have left the moon partially clear, and with the sudden access of light Bart could make out two somethings close beside the piled up rocks, and for some moments he could not be sure that they were men prostrated on their chests crawling towards the entrance to the cattle corral, for they seemed to assimilate with the color of the earth; and though he strained his eyes, not a trace of motion could he detect.

By degrees, though, it seemed to him that one of the figures was a man, the other some shaggy kind of crouching beast, till his eyes grew more educated, and he decided that one was an Indian naked to the waist, while the other was wearing his buffalo robe as an additional means of protection.

Bart watched them attentively, and still the figures did not move. At last, however, he saw that they had changed their position, creeping closer to

the piled up rocks, and at last, evidently encouraged by the fact that when the firing took place that evening there was no response, the two savages suddenly rose erect and went to the piled up stones that blocked the corral entry.

"How did they know the cattle were there?" said Bart, putting his lips close to Joses's ear.

"Nose!" whispered back the frontiersman laconically.

"But how could they tell that this was the entrance?" whispered Bart again.

"Eyes!" replied Joses; and he then laid his hand upon Bart's lips, as a sign that he must refrain from speaking any more.

Bart rather chafed at this, and he was growing excited as well, for it troubled him that Joses and Beaver should have let these two spies go right up to such a treasure as the cattle corral unchallenged; and though he would not have thought of firing at the savages, he could not help thinking that something ought to be done—what, he could not say—for the low, grating noise he now heard was certainly the Indians moving one of the blocks of stone that had so carefully been placed there that afternoon.

"They're opening the corral, my lad!" said Joses just then, in a hoarse whisper; "and if we don't stop 'em we shall be having 'em drive the whole lot of bullocks and cows right away into the plains, and never see a hoof again."

"What's to be done, then?" whispered Bart, whose face was covered with a wet dew, while his cheeks were at fever heat.

"Well, my lad, they seem to have found out the way easy enough by crawling over the cattle trail; but I suppose we shall either have to be robbed, or else we must stop 'em; so, as the doctor

won't like all our cattle to go, I'm going to stop 'em."

"It's very horrible!" whispered Bart.

"'Tis, my lad; so don't you do it. Leave it to us. Hah! that's a big stone down, and the cattle's beginning to fidget. Now, Beaver, what do you say?"

The Beaver answered with his rifle, which gave a sharp report, just as the moon shone out a little more clearly.

"Hit!" said Joses, laconically, as they saw quite plainly the two Indians start back from the rocks right out into the clear moonlight, one of them uttering a fierce, hoarse yell, and staggering as if about to fall, when the other sprang forward and caught him by the chest, holding him up, and, as it was plain to see, forming of the body of his wounded companion a shield to protect himself from the bullets of their unseen assailants.

"They must not go away and tell tales," muttered Joses, as he took aim; but just then the interpreter's rifle rang out, and the half nude Indian turned partly around, so that they could see in white paint upon his breast, seeming to gleam horribly in the moonlight, the ghastly skull and cross bones that appeared to have been adopted as the badge of the tribe. Then he fell back into the arms of his friend, who clasped his arms round him, and backed slowly, keeping the wounded man's face to the firing party, while, as if mechanically, the injured savage kept step.

Crack went the Beaver's rifle again, and there was a dull thud telling of a hit, but still the two Indians retreated slowly.

Crack! went Joses's rifle, and he uttered a low growl.

"I'm sure I hit him, and I dunno whether it touched

the t'other one—a cowardly sneak to sneak behind his fellow like that.”

Crack—crack—crack—crack! four rifles uttered their reports, which seemed to reverberate from the face of the mountain; and as the smoke rose slowly, and Bart could gaze at the moonlit plain and try to read the meaning of the fierce yell of defiance that he had heard arise, he saw that the first Indian lay upon his back with the moon shining upon his ghastly, painted breast, while his companion was rapidly disappearing as he ran swiftly over the plain.

The Beaver's rifle rang out again, and he started up into a kneeling position, gazing after the object at which he had fired, while his fingers mechanically reloaded his piece. Then he uttered a low, guttural cry of anger and sank down into his former position.

“Missed him, Beaver?” said Joses, quietly.

“No,” was the sharp retort. “He was hit, but he will escape to his dogs of people.”

This was a tremendous speech for the chief, who, however, seemed to be acquiring the English tongue with remarkable rapidity, the fact being that he had long known a great deal of English, but had been too proud to make use of it till he could speak sufficiently well to make himself understood with ease, and therefore he had brought up the interpreter as a medium between him and his white friends.

They watched through the rest of the night, after communicating to the doctor the reason for the firing, but there was no fresh alarm. The moon rose higher and shed a clear effulgence that seemed to make the plain as light as day, while the shadow of the mountain appeared to become black, and the ravines and cracks in its sides to be so many dense marks set in solid silver.

Daylight at last, with the silvery moon growing

pale and the stars fading out. First a heavy gray, then a silvery light, then soft, roseate tints, followed by orange flecks far up in the east, and then one glorious golden blaze to herald the sun, as the great orb slowly seemed to roll up over the edge of the plain, and bring with it life, and light, and hope.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bart, as he rose from his cramped position in the rifle pit. "Oh, Joses! my back! my legs! Ah, ah! Oh my! Do rub me! I'm so stiff I can hardly move."

"That'll soon go off, my lad. There, I suppose most of us may go off duty now, for I can't see any Injun out on the plains."

"Yes, hundreds!" said the Beaver, who had been shading his eyes and gazing intently over the sunlit expanse of rocky landscape dotted with trees.

"Where, Beaver?" said Joses.

For answer the chief pointed right away and both Joses and Bart tried to make out what he meant, but in vain.

The Beaver smiled.

"Ah, it's all very well for you to laugh," said Joses, bluntly, "but you've got eyes that sees round corners of hills, and through clumps of wood and bits of mountain. I never saw such eyes in my life."

"My eyes will do," said the Beaver, quietly. "The Apaches are over yonder. They will be on the watch to carry off the cattle or to kill us if they can."

"Yes, that's it," said Joses, "if they can."

Without another word the Beaver and half a dozen of his followers went down the slope, and climbed the stone gateway, to leap into the plain, where, without a word of instruction, they bore off the body of the fallen Indian, and buried it down in the rift where the other two had been laid. They returned

to partake of the morning meal that had been prepared, fires being lit in crevices and chasms of the zigzag way; and this meal being partaken of in the bright morning sunshine, seemed to make the dangers of the night appear trifling, and the spirits of the people rose.

The greatest danger was with respect to the cattle, which had to be driven out to pasture along near the edge of the lake, and this was done at once, every available man mounting his horse and forming guard, so as to protect the cattle and pasture his horse at the same time.

This was carried on for some days, and a careful watch was kept out towards the plain; but though bodies of Indians were seen maneuvering in the distance, none approached the mountain, whose flag waved out defiance; and as night after night passed without alarm, there were some of the party sanguine enough to say that the Indians had had their lesson and would come no more.

"What do you say to that, Beaver?" said Joses, laying his hand upon the chief's shoulder, and looking him in the face.

"Indian dog of Apache never forgives," he replied, quietly. "They may come today—tomorrow—next moon. Who can tell when the Apache will come and strike? But he will come."

"There, Master Bart, hear that!" said Joses. "How about going down into the canyon to spear salmon now?"

So confidently was this said that it made a deep impression on all assembled, and the greatest effect of the declaration was to increase the men's vigilance, which had been greatly relaxed.

CHAPTER XX

A RACE FOR LIFE.

THE Beaver's knowledge of the Apache nature was soon vindicated, for it was only the next night, as our friends were gazing out upon the spreading plain and talking in tones subdued, as if in awe of the solemn silence that was over the land, the Beaver suddenly held up his hand to command absolute silence. Then he drew Bart toward him and pointed outward. "Apache dogs!" he whispered. "Young chief Bart, see?"

"No," replied the lad, after gazing intently for some time; and then, without a word, he glided off along the narrow, rocky, well sheltered path, and made his way to the doctor, who, with his men, was upon the *qui vive*.

"Well, Bart, what is it?" he said, eagerly.

"The Beaver can see Apaches on the plain."

"A night attack, eh?" said the doctor. "Well, we shall be ready for them. Why have you come—to give us warning?"

"I came first for the glass," replied Bart. "I'll send you notice if they appear likely to attack, sir."

"Then I hope you will not have to send the notice, my lad," said the doctor, "for I don't like fighting in the dark."

As he spoke he handed the glass, and Bart returned to the gallery.

"Are they still there?" he whispered.

"Yes; Apache dogs!" was the reply. "Good medicine."

"They won't find it so," growled Joses, "if they come close up here, for my rifle has got to be hungry again. I'm 'bout tired of not being left peaceable and alone, and my rifle's like me, it means to bite."

As he crouched there, muttering and thinking of the narrow escapes they had had, Bart carefully focused the glass—no easy task in the deep gloom that surrounded them—and after several trials he saw something which made him utter an ejaculation full of wonder.

"What is it, my lad?" whispered Joses.

"The young chief sees the Apache dogs?" said the interpreter.

"Yes!" exclaimed Bart; "the plain swarms with them!"

"Then they're gathering for a big attack in the morning," said Joses. "Are they mounted?"

"Yes, all of them. I can just make them out crossing the plain."

"Well, their horses are only good to run away upon," growled Joses; "they can't ride up this mountain. Let me have a look, my lad."

Bart handed the glass, and Joses took a long, eager look through it at the gathering of Apache warriors.

"I tell you what," he said, "we shall have to look out or they'll drive off every head of cattle and every leg of horse. They're as cunning as cunning, I don't care what any one says, and some of these days we shall open our eyes and find ourselves in a pretty mess."

"The Apache dogs shall not have the horses!" said the Beaver, fiercely.

"That's right; don't let 'em have them!" cried Joses. "I don't want 'em to go; but here's one thing I should like answered—how are we going to find 'em in pasture with all these wild beasts hanging about ready to swoop down and make a stampede of it, and drive 'em off?"

"The Beaver's young men will drive the horses and cattle out," said the Beaver, in tones of quiet confidence, "and bring them back again quite safe."

"If you can do that," said Joses, "perhaps we can hold out; but it don't seem likely that we shall get much salmon from down in the canyon yonder, which is a pity, for I've took to quite longing for a bit of that, and if the Apaches don't take care I shall have some yet.

Day broke, and the sun rose, displaying a sight that disheartened many of the occupants of the rock, for far out in the plain, and well beyond the reach of rifle bullets, there was troop after troop of Indian warriors, riding gently here and there, as if to exercise their horses, but doubtless in pursuance of some settled plan.

The doctor inspected them carefully through his glass to try and estimate their numbers, and he quite came to the conclusion that they intended to invest the rock fortress, and if they could make no impression in one way, to try to starve out its occupants.

"We must make sure, once for all, Bart, that we have no weak points—no spot by which these Indian wretches can ascend and take us in the rear. Suppose you take the Beaver and two of his men with you, ascend the mountain, and make a careful inspection."

"But that would hardly be so satisfactory, sir, as if we went all round the base first to make sure that there is no way up from the plain."

"No, I know that," replied the doctor; "but that is too dangerous a task."

"I'm beginning to like dangerous tasks, now, sir," said Bart; "they are so exciting."

"Well, go, then," said the doctor; "but you must be mounted, or you will have no chance of retreat; and of course you will all keep a sharp lookout in case the Indians swoop down."

Bart promised, and went at once to the Beaver and Joses.

"I'm to come too, ain't I?" said the latter.

"No, you are to help keep guard," was the reply; and very sulkily Joses resumed his place, while the Beaver descended with Bart and four of his men to enter the rock stable and obtain their horses, the rest having to remain fasting while their companions were mounted and ridden out; the Indian ponies in particular resenting the indignity of being shut up again behind the stones by turning round and kicking vehemently.

The Apaches were so far distant that Bart was in hopes that they would not see the reconnaissance that was being made, as he rode out at the head of his little Indian party, after fully explaining to the Beaver that which they were to do.

His first step was to inspect the part of the mountain on the side that was nearest to the chimney, and the chasm into which they had descended to see the silver on their first coming.

This was the shortest portion, by far, and it had the advantage of a good deal of cover in the shape of detached rocks, which sheltered them from the eyes of those upon the plain; but, all the same, the Beaver posted two of his men as scouts in good places for observing the movements of the foe and giving warning should they approach; the plan being to take refuge beneath the gallery, where they

would be covered by the rifles of Joses and their friends.

It was not at all a difficult task to satisfy the most exacting that ascent from the plain anywhere from the gallery to the precipice at the edge of the canyon was utterly impossible; and after carefully examining every crack and rift that ran upwards, the little party cantered back, said a few words to Joses, and then prepared for their more risky task, that of examining the mountain round by its northern and more open side, for there was no cover here, and their path would be more fully in view of any watchful eye upon the plain.

They drew up by the gateway, and had a few minutes' conversation with the doctor, who said at parting:

"You can soon satisfy yourself, Bart; but give a good look up as you come back, in case you may have missed anything in going."

"I'll be careful," said Bart, eagerly.

"Mind that scouts are left. I should leave at least three at different points on the road. They can give you warning at once. Then gallop back as if you were in a race. We shall be ready to cover you with our rifles if they come on. Now lose no time. Go!"

Bart touched Black Boy with his heels, and went off at a canter, but checked his speed instantly, so that he might the more easily gaze up at the mountain side, while, thoroughly intent upon his task, the Beaver left scouts at intervals, each man backing close into the rock, and sitting there like a statue watching the plain.

No Indians were in sight as far as Bart could see, and he rode slowly on, inspecting every opening in the face of the mountain, and so intent upon his task that he left the care of his person to the

chief, whose watchful eyes were everywhere, now pointing out rifts in the rock, now searching the plain.

It was a much longer distance, and the importance of the task and its risk gave a piquancy to the ride that made the blood dance through Bart's veins. He could not help a little shudder running through him from time to time, though it was almost more of a thrill, and he could not have told, had he been asked, whether it was a thrill of dread or of pleasure. Perhaps there may have been more of the former, for he kept glancing over his right shoulder from time to time to see if a body of Indians might be sweeping at full gallop over the plain.

Half the distance was ridden over, and this gave confidence to the adventurer, who rode more steadily on, and spared no pains to make sure of there being no possibility of the Indians reaching the top from that side.

On went Bart, and three fourths of the way was passed with nothing overhead but towering perpendicular rocks, impossible for anything but a fly to scale. The Indians had been left one after the other as scouting sentries, and at last, when no one was in company with the young adventurer but the Beaver, the edge of the canyon was well in sight, and only a few hundred yards of the rock remained to be inspected.

"We will do this, at all events," said Bart, pressing his cob's sides with his heels; and he cantered on, for the face of the mountain was now so perpendicular and smooth that there was no difficulty in determining its safety at a glance.

Only about three hundred yards more and then there was the canyon, presenting a barrier of rock so steep, as well as so much higher, that there was

nothing to fear on that side. Only these three hundred yards to examine, and the dangerous enterprise was almost as good as done, for every step taken by the horses then would be one nearer to safety. Bart had ridden on, leaving the Beaver, who had drawn rein, looking back at the plain, when suddenly there was a warning cry, and the lad looked over his shoulder to see the Beaver signaling to him.

"A minute won't make much difference," thought Bart, excitedly; and instead of turning, he pressed his horse's flanks and galloped on to finish his task, rejoicing in the fact as he reached the canyon edge that he had seen every yard of the mountain side, and that it was even more perpendicular than near the gateway,

"Now for back at a gallop," said Bart, who was thrilling with excitement; and turning his steed right on the very edge of the canyon, he prepared to start back, when, to his horror, he saw a party of dismounted Indians rise up as it were from the canyon about a hundred yards away. With a fierce yell they made for the young horseman, but as Black Boy bounded forward they stopped short. A score of bullets came whizzing about Bart's ears, and as the reports of the pieces echoed from the face of the mountain the cob reared right up and fell over backwards, Bart saving himself by a nimble spring on one side, and fortunately retaining his hold of the bridle as the cob scrambled up.

Just then, as the Indians came yelling on, and Bart in his confusion felt that he must either use rifle or knife, he could not tell which, there was a rush of hoofs, a quick check, and a hand gripped him by the collar.

For a moment he turned to defend himself, but as he did so he saw that it was a friend, and his

hand closed upon the Indian pony's mane, for it was the Beaver come to his help; and spurring hard he cantered off, with Bart half running, half lifted at every plunge, as the pony made towards where their first friend was waiting rifle in hand.

"Let me try—draw him in," panted Bart, gripping his own pony's mane hard as it raced on beside the Beaver's; and with a hand upon each, he gave a bound and a swing and landed in his saddle, just as the Apaches halted to fire another volley.

Black Boy did not rear up this time, and Bart now saw the reason of the last evolution, feeling thankful that the poor beast had not been more badly hit. His hurt was painful enough, no doubt, the ball having cut one of his ears right through, making it bleed profusely.

But there was no time to think of the pony's hurts while bullets were whistling about them from behind; and now Bart could see the cause of the Beaver's alarm signal, and bitterly regretted that he had not responded and turned at once, the few minutes he had spent in continuing his inspection having been a waste of time sufficient to place all of them in deadly peril.

For there, far out on the plain, was a very large body of the Apaches coming on at full gallop, having evidently espied them at last, and they were riding now so as to cut them off from their friends, and drive them back into the corner formed by the mountain and the canyon, a spot where escape would have been impossible even without the presence of a second hostile party of Indians to make assurance doubly sure.

"Ride! ride!" the Beaver said hoarsely; and in his excitement his English was wonderfully clear and good. "Don't mind the dogs behind; they cannot hit us as we go."

All the same, though, as Bart listened to their yells and the reports of their rifles, he shuddered, and thought of the consequences of one bullet taking effect on horse or man.

Every moment, though, as they rode on, the cries of the Apaches behind sounded more faint, but the danger in front grew more deadly.

They picked up first one Indian of their party, and then another, the brave fellows sitting motionless in their saddles like groups cut in bronze, waiting for their chief to join them, even though the great body of enemies was tearing down towards them over the plain. Then as the Beaver reached them, a guttural cry of satisfaction left their lips, and they galloped on behind their leader without so much as giving a look at the dismounted Indians who still came running on.

A tremendous race! Well it was that the little horses had been well fed and also well rested for some time past, or they would never have been able to keep on at such a headlong speed, tearing up the earth at every bound, and spurning it behind them as they snorted and shook their great straggling manes, determined apparently to win in this race for life and death, and save their riders from the peril in which they were placed.

Another Indian of their scouts was reached, and their party increased to five, while two more were ahead waiting patiently for them to come.

The wind whistled by their ears; the ponies seemed to have become part of them, and every nerve was now strained to the utmost, but Bart began to despair, the Apaches were getting so near. They were well mounted, too, and it was such a distance yet before the gateway could be reached, where the first prospect of a few friendly shots could be expected to help them to escape from a

horrible death. Mercy, Bart knew, there would certainly be none, and in spite of all their efforts, it seemed as if they must lose the race.

Involuntarily he cocked his rifle and threw it to the left as if getting ready to fire, but the Beaver uttered an angry cry.

"No, no; ride, ride," he said; and Bart felt that he was right, for to fire at that vast body would have been madness. What good would it do him to bring down one or even a dozen among the hundreds coming on, all thirsting for their blood?

In response Bart gripped his pony more tightly, rising slightly in the stirrups, and the next moment they were passing their scout like a flash, and he had wheeled his pony and was after them.

One more scout to reach and then a race of a few hundred yards, and rifles would begin to play upon their pursuers; but would they ever reach that next scout?

It seemed impossible; but the ponies tore on, and Bart began in his excitement to wonder what would be done if one should stumble and fall. Would the others stop and defend him, or would they gallop away to save their own lives? Then he asked himself what he would do if the Beaver were to go down, and he hoped that he would be brave enough to try and save so good a man.

Just then a rifle shot rang out in their front. It was fired by the scout they were racing to join.

It was long shot, but effective, for an Apache pony fell headlong down, and a couple more went over it, causing a slight diversion in their favor—so much, trifling though it was, that the Beaver and his party gained a few yards, and, instead of galloping right down upon them, the Apaches began to edge off a little in the same direction as that in which the fugitives were rushing.

And still they tore on, while at last the Apaches edged off more and more till they were racing on about a hundred yards to the left, afraid to close in lest their prey should get too far ahead. They were all tearing on in this fashion when the last scout was reached, already setting spurs to his pony as the Beaver passed, and then came the final gallop to the gateway for life or death.

For now came the question: Would the firing of their friends check the Apaches, or would they press on in deadly strife to the bitter end?

"Ride up close to rock below Joses," shouted the Beaver; "then jump off on right side of horse, turn and fire;" and with these words, spoken in broken English, ringing in his ears, Bart felt his spirits rise, and, uttering a cheer full of excitement, he rose in his stirrups and galloped on.

The endurance of the little horses was wonderful, but, all the same, the peril was of a terrible nature, for the ground which they were forced to take, close in under the perpendicular mountain walls, was rough and strewn with blocks of stone, and Bart felt that the slightest swerve or a fall meant death of the most horrible kind.

CHAPTER XXL

A PERILOUS MISSION.

TWICE over Bart's cob hesitated at a monstrous piece of rock, and each time he nearly lost his seat, but he recovered it and raced on.

Faster and faster they swept along, the Indian followers of the Beaver urging their horses on by voice and action, while the yells of the Apaches acted like so many goads to the frightened beasts.

Another fierce race for the last hundred yards, with the Apaches closing in more and more, and the fate of the fugitives seemed sealed, when, just as the enemy gave a fierce yell of triumph, rising in their stirrups to lash their panting little steeds into an accelerated pace, the rock suddenly seemed to flash, and a sharp spluttering fire to dart from the zigzag path.

Some of the pursuing horses and their riders fell, others leaped or stumbled over them; and as Bart and his companions drew rein close in beneath the gallery, forming a breastwork of their blown horses, and began firing with such steadiness as their excitement would allow, a regular volley flashed from above their heads, and Joses and his companions followed it up with a triumphant shout.

The effect was marvelous—the great body of Apaches turning as upon a pivot, and sweeping off at full gallop over the plain, leaving their dead and

wounded behind, and pursued by many a deadly shot.

Bart threw himself down, completely overcome, to lie there panting and exhausted, till the doctor and Joses came and led him up, the Beaver and his followers staying behind to inclose the cavern stable with stones, after they had placed their own ponies and Black Boy within.

Watch was set that night as usual, but it came on so pitchy dark that nothing could be made out distinctly a yard away. Bart was with the Beaver and Joses in their old place in the gallery, fortunately well sheltered by the rock overhead, for the rain came down in torrents, and gurgled loudly, as it rushed in and out of the crevices of the rock, finding its way to the plains.

Towards morning the rain ceased, and with the rising sun the clouds cleared away, the sun shining out brilliantly; and as the Beaver strained over the stones to get a good look into the corral, he uttered a hoarse cry.

"What's wrong?" cried Bart and Joses, starting up from their wearying cramped position.

"Cattle gone!" cried the Beaver; and a moment later, "Horses are gone!"

It was too true; for, taking advantage of the darkness and the heavy rain, the Apaches had sent in a party of their cleverest warriors, who had quietly removed the barriers of rock, and the cattle had followed their natural instinct, and gone quietly their way down to the pastures, where, at the first breaking of day, there was a strong band of mounted men ready to drive them away into the plain, where the Beaver pointed them out miles away, moving slowly in the bright sunshiny morning.

The alarm was given, but nothing could be done, and the doctor looked with dismay at the lowering

faces of the men who had agreed to follow his fortunes out there into the wilderness.

It almost seemed as if the Apaches would go away contented now; but when Bart asked the Beaver for his opinion, he only laughed, grimly.

"As long as we are here they will come," he said. "They will never stay away."

The little colony tried to throw off the gloom of their misfortune by working hard at getting silver, and this proved to be so remunerative that after a while there was no more murmuring about the loss of the cattle and horses; but all the same, Bart saw that the doctor went about in a very moody spirit, for he knew that matters could not go on as they were. Before long they must have fresh stores, and it was absolutely necessary for communication to be opened up with Lerisco if they were to exist.

"I don't know what is to be done, Bart," the doctor said, one day. "I cannot ask the Indians to go without horses, and if a message is not conveyed to the governor, asking him for help, the time will come, and is not far distant, when we shall be in a state of open revolution, because the men will be starving."

"Not so bad as that, sir," cried Bart.

"Yes, my dear boy, it is as bad as that. I begin to repent of coming upon this silver expedition, for I am very helpless here with these wretched savages to mar all my plans."

It was the very next morning that, after being on guard at the gate all night, Bart was thinking of the time when, for the sake of protecting the cattle, they had kept guard in the gallery over the corral and by the cavern stable, when, out in the bright sunshine at the foot of the mountain, he saw a sight which made him rub his eyes and ask himself whether he was dreaming.

For there, calmly cropping what herbage he could find, was his old favorite who had carried him so often and so well—Black Boy.

"He must have escaped," cried Bart, excitedly, "or else it is a trap to get us to go out, and the Indians are waiting for us."

With this idea he called Joses and Beaver, showing them the little horse, and they both agreeing that it was no trap or plan on the Indians' part, Bart eagerly ran out and called the docile little steed, which came trotting up and laid its soft muzzle in his hand.

"Yes, Bart," said the doctor, "we have a horse now for a messenger, but I dare not send you; and if you lent Black Boy to the Beaver and sent him, I am sure the governor would never respond to my appeal for help. I should be doubtful even if I sent Joses."

"Black Boy would not let Joses mount him, sir," replied Bart; "he never would."

"I dare not send you," said the doctor again.

"Why not, sir? I could find my way," replied Bart, excitedly. "Trust me, and I will go and tell the governor such a tale that you will see he will send a squadron or two of lancers, and horses and cattle for our help."

"If I send you, Bart, it must be tonight, with a letter for the governor—one which, I am sure, he will respond to when he hears from you of the enormous wealth of the canyon and the mine. Now go and consult with the Beaver as to the track you had better follow so as to avoid the Indians. I must take a few precautions against attack, for they seem to be coming straight on, and I sadly fear they mean to invest us now."

Bart could not help feeling very strangely excited as the evening approached, the more especially that

the Apaches had come close on several hundred strong.

"I shouldn't wonder if we have a bad storm to-night, Master Bart," said Joses, as the sun set in a band of curious coppery colored clouds, while others began to form rapidly all over the face of the heavens, with a strangely weird effect. "You won't go if the weather's bad, I s'pose, my lad?"

"Indeed, but I shall," said Bart, excitedly. "If I am to go, I shall go."

The doctor came up then and seemed torn by two opinions, speaking out frankly to the lad upon the point.

"I don't want to send you, Bart, and yet I do," he said, rather excitedly. "It seems an act of cruelty to send you forth on such a mission, but it is my only hope."

"I'll go, sir," cried Bart, earnestly. "I'll go for your sake and Maude's."

"Thank you, my brave lad," cried the doctor, with emotion; "but it is going to be a terrible night."

"The safer for our purpose, sir," replied Bart.

Two hours later, Black Boy, already saddled and bridled, a good blanket rolled up on his saddle bow, and a bag of meal and some dried bison flesh attached to his pad behind, was led down the rugged way to the gate, which had been opened out ready.

Joses and the Indians were on either side ready with their rifles, as the lad mounted in the outer darkness and silence; a few farewell words were uttered, and he made his plans as to the direction in which he meant to ride, which was pretty close in to the side of the mountain for about a quarter of a mile, and then away at right angles for the end of the lake,

"Good by, my boy, and God be with you," whispered the doctor, pressing one hand.

"Take care of yourself, dear lad," whispered Joses, pressing the other, and then giving way to the chief, who bent forward, saying, in his low, grave voice:

"The Beaver-with-Sharp-Teeth would like to ride beside the brave young chief, but the Great Spirit says it must not be. Go, you can laugh at the Apache dogs."

Bart could not answer, but pressed his steed's sides, and the brave little animal ambled over the soft ground, avoiding the rocks and tall prickly cacti with wonderful skill, while Bart sat there, his ears attent and nostrils distended, listening for the slightest sound of danger, as the Indians might be swarming round him for aught he knew.

The darkness was terrible, and still there was a strange lurid aspect above him, showing dimly the edge of the top of the mountain. That there was going to be a storm he felt sure—everything was so still, the heat was so great, and the strange oppression of the air foretold its coming; but he hoped to be far on his way and beyond the Indians ere it came, for the flashes of lightning might betray him to the watchful eyes of the enemy, and then he knew it meant a ride for life, as it would not take the Apaches long to mount.

All at once, as he was riding cautiously along, his rifle slung behind him, and his head bent forward to peer into the darkness, there was a sharp flash, and what seemed to be a great star of fire struck the rock, shedding a brilliant light which revealed all around for a short distance, as if a light had suddenly appeared from an opening in the mountain. Then, close in beneath where the electric bolt had struck, he could see a knot of about a dozen Indians,

who uttered a tremendous yell as they caught sight of him, making Black Boy tear off at full speed, while the next moment there was a deafening crash, and it seemed to Bart that a huge mass of the mountain side had fallen crumbling down.

That one flash which struck the mountain seemed as if it had been the signal for the elements to commence their strife, for directly after the heavens were in a blaze. Forked lightnings darted here and there; the dense clouds opened and shut, as if to reveal the wondrously vivid glories beyond, and the thunder kept up a series of deafening peals that nearly drove the little steed frantic.

Bart knew that the pealing thunder would effectually prevent the Indians from hearing him, but the lightning was a terrible danger when it lit up the plains; and as he peered ahead he fully expected to see a body of horsemen riding to cut him off.

He had, however, no occasion to fear present pursuit, for the knot of dismounted Indians whom he had seen close under the rock when the lightning fell, lay crushed and mangled amongst a pile of shattered rocks which the electric discharge had sent thundering down; but as the storm lulled, and another little body of dismounted Indians crept cautiously up to the fallen rocks, their object being to surprise the guards at the gateway, they learned from one of their dying friends of the appearance of the young chief upon his little black horse, and that he had gone right off over the plain.

The sequel to this was that Bart was put into deadly danger before he had ridden many hours.

CHAPTER XXII.

BART'S RIDE.

As the sun rose, flooding the wild plains with heat, and Bart drew rein and looked about after his long night ride to see that there was hardly a cloud in sight—and, better still, no signs of Indians—he uttered a cry of joy, and bent down and smoothed and patted his brave little steed, which had carried him so far and so well.

Then he turned a little to the east, and rode straight for a clump of trees about a couple of miles away—a spot that promised ample herbage and shade, perhaps water, while, unseen, he could keep a good lookout over the open plain.

The patch Bart reached was only a few acres in extent, and it offered more than he had bargained for, there being a pleasantly clear pool of water in an open spot, while the grass was so tempting that he had hardly time to remove Black Boy's bit, so eager was he to begin.

He was soon tethered to a stout sapling, however, feeding away to his heart's content, while, pretty well wearied out by his long night ride, Bart sat down beneath a tree, where he could have a good view of the plain over which he had ridden, and began to refresh himself, after a good draught of pure cool water, with one of the long, dry strips of bison meat that formed his store.

Bart soon found a drowsiness stealing over him, and then he began to nod.

Three or four times he aroused himself with an angry shake, but after a while he succumbed utterly. The sun mounted higher and higher, to the highest point in the heavens, and then came down and down, till its light began to grow softer and more mellow, and the shadows cast by the tree trunks went out in a different direction from that which they had taken when Bart dropped asleep.

All at once he awoke in a fright, for something hard was thumping and pawing at his chest, and, on looking up, there was Black Boy right over him, scraping and pawing at him as if impatient to go on.

"Why, I must have been asleep," cried Bart, catching at the horse's head stall and thrusting him away. "Gently, old boy; your hoofs are not very soft. You hurt."

He raised himself up, stretching the while.

"How tiresome to sleep like that!" he muttered. "Why, I had not finished my breakfast, and——"

Bart said no more, but stood there motionless, staring straight before him, where the plain was now ruddy and glowing with the rays of the evening sun.

For there, about a mile away, he could see a body of some twenty or thirty Indians coming over the plain at an easy rate; guided evidently by one on foot who ran before them with bended head, and Bart knew as well as if he had heard the word shouted in his ear that they were following him by his trail.

There was not a moment to lose, and with trembling hands he secured the buckles of the saddle girths, and strapped on the various little articles that formed his luggage, slung his rifle, and then, leading the cob to the other side of the patch of woodland, where he would be out of sight of the

Indians, he mounted, marked a spot on the horizon which would keep him in a direct line, and the woodland clump as long as possible between him and his enemies, and rode swiftly off.

Instead of riding boldly up, and finding out that Bart had just galloped away, the Apaches approached by means of three or four dismounted men, who crept slowly from clump of brush to patch of long grass, and so on and on, till first one and then another reached the edge of the woody place, where they rested for a time, eagerly scanning each leaf and tree trunk for an enemy at whom to fire or who would fire at them.

Then they crept on a little farther and found Bart's halting place and the feeding ground of the horse. Then they came by degrees upon his trail through the wood, all very fresh, and still they went on cautiously, and like men to whom a false step meant a fatal bullet wound, while all the time their companions sat there upon the plain, keen and watchful, ready for action at a moment's notice, and waiting the signal to come on.

At last this came, for the advance dismounted scouts had traced the trail to the farther edge of the wood, and seen even the deep impression made by Bart's foot as he sprang upon his steed.

Then the mounted Apaches came on at a great rate, dashed through the wood and came up to their friends, who triumphantly pointed to the emerging trail, and on they all went once more, one man only remaining dismounted to lead the party, while the rest followed close behind.

This little piece of caution had given poor Bart two hours' start, and when the Indians came out of the wood he had been a long time out of sight; but there was his plainly marked trail, and that they could follow, and meant to follow to the end.

Bart had the advantage of his enemies in this, that as long as he could keep well out of sight across the plains he could go on as fast as his horse could gallop, while they had to cautiously track his every step. Then, too, when he came to dry, rocky or stony portions, he took advantage thereof, for he knew that his horse's hoof prints would be indistinct, and sometimes disappear altogether.

He pressed on, hitting the backward route pretty accurately, and recognized the various mountains and hills they had passed under the Beaver's guidance, and every stride taken by the untiring little horse had its effect upon the lad, for he was one nearer to safety.

Still it was a terrible ride, for it was only after traversing some stony plain or patch of rock that he dared draw rein and take a few hours' rest, while his steed fed and recruited its energies as well.

He would lie down merely meaning to rest, and then drop off fast asleep, to awaken in an agony of dread, expecting to see the Apaches springing upon him to end his career.

They, for their part, kept up their untiring tracking of the trail day after day till it was too dark to see, and the moment it was light enough to distinguish a foot print they were after him again.

It was a terrible journey—terrible in its loneliness as well as in its real and imaginary dangers, for there was a good deal of fancied dread towards the latter part of the time, when Bart had reached a point where the Apaches gave up the chase, civilization being too near at hand for them to venture farther.

But there was the town at last, looking indistinct, though, and misty. All seemed to be like a dream now, and the crowd of swarthy, ragged Mexicans, in their blankets, sombreros, and rags, were all part of

his dream too, as with his last effort he thrust his hand into his breast and took out the letter of which he was the bearer.

Then it seemed to him that, as he cantered through the crowd, with his cob throwing up the dust of the plaza, it was some one else who waved a letter over his head, shouting : " The governor ! the governor ! " to the swarthy, staring mob ; and, lastly, that it was somebody else who, worn out with exhaustion now that the task was done, felt as if everything had gone from him, every nerve and fiber had become relaxed, and fell heavily from the cob he rode into the dust.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AID FOR THE BESIEGED.

For some hours all was blank to the brave young fellow, and then he seemed to struggle back to consciousness to find Maude seated by his bedside, looking very pale and anxious. As soon as he opened his eyes, she rose and went to fetch the governor, who soon entered with a doctor. It was found that Bart had no fever and no injuries. He had merely suffered from utter exhaustion, and even now was almost as strong as ever, thanks to his long rest.

"Tomorrow night, my lad," said the governor in answer to Bart's eager appeals to him for an immediate start. "Tomorrow night is the very earliest time we can be ready. The men could set out at once, but we must have store wagons prepared, and a sufficiency of things to enable the doctor to hold his own when these savage beasts have been tamed down. They do not deserve to be called men."

"But you will lose no time, sir?" cried Bart.

"Not a minute, my lad ; and so you had better eat and sleep all you can till we are quite ready to start."

In that way and in narrating many past adventures to the governor's lady and children, and in pleasant converse with Maude, Bart passed the time easily enough, and when the hour of departure had arrived he and Black Boy were as fleet and strong and ardent as they had ever been.

Bart found a dozen wagons had been filled with stores, thirty horses had been provided with drivers and caretakers, and a troop of fifty lancers, with their baggage wagons and an ample supply of ammunition, were being prepared for their march, their captain carefully inspecting his men's accouterments the while.

A finer body of bronzed and active men it would have been impossible to select. Every one was armed with a short heavy bore rifle, a keen saber, and a long, sharply pointed lance; while their horses were the very perfection of chargers—swift, full of bone and sinew, and looking as if, could their riders but get a chance, four times the number of Indians would go down before them like dry reeds in a furious gale.

"Are you only going to take fifty?" said Bart to the captain.

"That's all, my lad," was the reply. "Is it not enough?"

"There must have been five hundred Indians before the camp," replied Bart.

"Well, that's only ten times as many," said the captain, laughingly. "Fifty are more than enough for such an attack, for we have discipline on our side, while they are only a mob. Don't you be afraid, my boy. I dare say we shall prove too many for them."

"I was not afraid," said Bart, stoutly; "but I don't want to see your party overwhelmed."

"Well, my young Indian runner," said the governor, coming up, "are you ready for another skirmish?"

"Yes, sir, I'm ready now," said Bart, promptly. "I can saddle up in five minutes."

"I shall be ready at sunset," said the captain; "my men are ready now."

"I've made up my mind to go with you," said the governor.

"You, sir!" cried Bart.

"Yes, my lad. I want to see the silver canyon and your mountain fortress. And besides, it seems to me that a brush with the Indians will do me good. I want them to have a severe lesson, for they are getting more daring in their encroachments every day. Can you make room for me?"

The captain expressed his delight, and Bart's eyes flashed as he felt that it was one more well armed, active, fighting man.

When evening came, after an affectionate farewell, and amidst plenty of cheers from the swarthy mob of idlers, the well mounted little party rode out along the road leading to the plains, with the lancers' accouterments jingling, their lance points gilded by the setting sun, and their black and yellow pennons fluttering in the pleasant evening breeze.

"At last," said Bart to himself, as he reined up and drew aside to see the gallant little array pass. "Oh! if we can only get one good chance at the cowardly savages! They won't hurt me now!"

And in imagination he saw himself riding in the line of horsemen, going at full speed for a body of bloodthirsty Indians, and driving them helter skelter like chaff before a storm.

With Bart for a guide, the relief party made good progress, but they were of course kept back a great deal by the wagons, well horsed as they were. Alone, the lancer troop could have gone rapidly over the ground, but the sight of hovering knots of Apaches appearing to right and left and in their rear, told that they were well watched, and that if the baggage was left for a few hours a descent would be sure to follow.

In fact, several attempts were made as they got

farther out into the plains to lure the lancers away from their stores, but Captain Miguel was too well versed in plain fighting to be led astray by these tactics.

"No," he said. "I have been bitten once. They'd get us miles away feigning attacks and leading us on, and at last, when we made ready for a charge, they'd break up and gallop in all directions; while the wagons would have been rifled and their guards all slain. I think we'll get our stores safe at the silver canyon fort, and then, if the Apaches will show fight, why, we shall be there."

Ten days glided on, with plenty of alarms, for, from being harassed by the presence of about a dozen Indians, these increased and grew till there would be nearly a hundred hovering around, and constantly on the watch to cut off any stragglers from the little camp.

They never succeeded, however, for the captain was too watchful. He never attempted any charges, but when the savages grew too daring he gave a few short sharp orders, and half a dozen of the best marksmen dismounted and made such practice with their short rifles, that pony after pony went galloping riderless over the plain.

This checked the enemy, but after a few hours they would come on again, and it seemed as if messengers were sent far and wide, for the Indians grew in numbers, till at the time when half the distance was covered, it seemed as if at least four hundred were always hovering around in bands of twenty or forty, making dashes down as if they meant to ride right through the camp, or cut the body of lancers in two. For they would come on yelling and uttering derisive cries till pretty close, and then wheel round like a flock of birds and gallop off again into the plain.

"Bah! Let the miserable mosquitoes be," said the captain, contemptuously. "We have not much farther to go, I suppose."

"I hope to show you the mountain tomorrow," replied Bart.

"Then they can wait for their chastisement for another day or two. Come now, my excitable young friend, you think I have been rather quiet and tame with these wretches, don't you?"

Bart's face grew scarlet.

"Well, sir, yes, I do," he said, frankly.

"Well spoken," said Captain Miguel, "well spoken; but you are wrong, my boy. I have longed, for days past, to lead my men in a good dashing charge, and drive these savage animals back to their dens; but I am a soldier in command, and I have to think of my men as well as my own feelings. These fifty men are to me worth all the Indian nations, and I cannot spare one life—no, not one drop of blood, unless it is to give these creatures such a blow as will cow them and teach them to respect a civilized people, who ask nothing of them but to be left alone. Wait a little longer, my lad; the time has not yet come."

That night strong outposts were formed, for the Indians were about in great force; but no attack was made, and at daybreak on a lovely morning, they were once more in motion, while, to Bart's great surprise, though he swept the plain in every direction, not an Indian was to be seen.

"What does that mean, think you?" said the governor, smiling.

"An ambush," replied Bart. "They are waiting for us somewhere."

"Right," exclaimed the captain, carefully inspecting the plain; "but there is little chance of ambush here, the ground is too open, unless they await us

on the other side of that rolling range of hills. You are right, though, my lad; it is to take effect later on. This is to lull us into security; they have not gone far."

A couple of hours brought them to the foot of the low ridge, when scouts were sent forward; but they signaled with their lances that the coast was clear, and the party rode on till the top was reached, and spurring a little in advance of the troop in company with the captain and the governor, Bart reined up and pointed right away over the gleaming lake to where the mountain stood up like some huge fort, built in the middle of the plain.

"There is the rock fortress," he cried.

"Forward, then!" cried the captain; "we must be there tonight. Keep up well with the wagons, and—halt! Yes, I expected so; there are our enemies away there in the distance. They will be down upon us before long, like so many swarms of bees."

The greatest caution was now observed, and they rode steadily on for a few miles farther, when Bart joyfully pointed out that the occupants of the rock fortress were still safe.

"How can you tell that?" said the governor, eagerly.

"By the flag, sir," said Bart. "There it is out upon the extreme right of the mountain. If the Indians had got the better of the doctor's party they would have torn it down."

"Or perhaps kept it up as a lure to entrap us," said the captain, smiling; "but I think you are right about that."

"What a splendid position for a city!" exclaimed the governor, as they rode on towards where the waters of the lake gleamed brightly in the sun.

"Yes, a great town might be placed there," said the captain, thoughtfully; "but you would want

some large barracks and a little army," he added, with a smile, "to keep our friends there at a distance."

For, as they neared the mountain, it seemed ominously like a certainty that the savages now meant to make a tremendous onslaught upon the band, for they were steadily coming on in large numbers, as if to meet the new comers before they could form a junction with the holders of the rock.

"I don't want to fight them if I can help it," said Captain Miguel, scanning the approaching Indians carefully as they advanced—"not until the wagons are in safety. If we do have to charge them, you drivers are all to make for the rock so as to get under the cover of our friends' fire. That is if it comes to a serious attack, but I do not think it will."

The watchfulness and care now exercised by their leader showed how well worthy he was of being placed in such a position, and the men, even to the governor, obeyed him without a word, though at times his orders seemed to run in opposition to their own ideas. For he seemed to be almost skirmishing from the Indians, instead of making a bold stand, and the result was that when, after a couple of hours, they came on in strength, their insolence increased with the seeming timidity of the relieving force.

All at once there was a fluttering of pennons, and the lances of the little Mexican force dropped from the perpendicular to the level, the spear points glistening like lightning in the evening sun.

This evolution startled the Apaches, some of whom began to draw rein, others rode over them, and the great cloud of horsemen began to exhibit signs of confusion. Some, however, charged on towards the wagons, and thus escaped the impact, as, with a

hearty cheer, and their horses at racing pace, the lancers dashed at, into, and over the swarm of Indians, driving their way right through.

Their course was strewn with Apaches and their ponies, but not a Mexican was left behind ; and then, before the savages could recover from their astonishment, the gallant little band had wheeled round and were coming back, trot—canter—gallop, once more at racing speed.

There was another tremendous impact, for there were so many of the savages that they could not avoid the charge, and once more the lancers rode right through them, leaving the ground strewn with dead and wounded men and ponies.

Their riderless steeds added to the confusion, while no sooner were the lancers clear, and forming up once more a couple of hundred yards away, than a tremendous fire was opened from the rock fortress and the wagon train, making men fall fast.

The lancers were soon in motion once more for their third charge, but this was only a feint, for the firing would have been fatal to friend as well as foe, there being no one to signal stay.

Still the Apaches did not know this, and having had two experiences—their first—of the charge of a body of heavily mounted, well disciplined men, they were satisfied, and as the lancers began to canter, were in full flight over the plain, men and ponies dropping beneath the fire and from previously received lance wounds, while the ground for a broad space was literally spotted with the injured and the dead.

“Oh, if I could have been with you!” cried Bart, riding up to the captain, rifle in hand.

“Let soldiers do soldiers’ work, my young friend,” said the captain, bluntly. “You are excited now ; perhaps you will think differently another time.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SILVER CITY IN THE PLAINS.

BART did think differently when he cooled down, and after a warm greeting from the doctor, who praised his bravery and thanked him for bringing help, saw the dreary business of burying the fallen in those fierce charges ; for he shuddered and thought of the horrors of such an occupation, even when the fights were in thorough self defense.

Joses was full of excitement, and kept on shaking hands with the Beaver instead of with Bart.

"I knew he'd do it. I knew he'd do it," he kept on saying. "There ain't a braver lad nowhere, that I will say."

There was but little time for talking and congratulations, however, for the wagons had to be unloaded, and camp formed for the lancers and Mexicans, the former being out in the plains driving in the Indian ponies that had not gone off with the Apaches, the result being that thirty were inclosed in the corral before dark, being some little compensation for the former loss.

Bart learned that night, when the captain and the governor were the guests of the doctor, that beyond occasional alarms but little had gone on during his absence. The Indians had been there all the time, and his friends had always been in full expectation of an attack, night or day, but none had come.

The most serious threatening had been on the

night when Bart set off, but the terrible storm had evidently stopped it, and the doctor related how the rock had been struck by lightning, a large portion shattered, and the bodies of several Indians found there the next morning.

There was a good watch set that night, not that there was much likelihood of the Indians returning, but to make sure ; and then many hours were spent in rejoicing, for several of the adventurers had been giving way to despair, feeling that they had done wrong in coming, and were asking in dismay what was to become of them when the stores were exhausted.

"We can't eat silver," they had reproachfully said to the doctor ; and when he reminded them how he had sent for help, they laughed him to scorn.

All murmurs were now silenced, and, light hearted and joyous, the future of the silver canyon became the principal topic of conversation with all.

The next morning, as it was found that the Indians were still hovering about, Captain Miguel showed himself ready for any emergency. The Beaver and his men were at once mounted on the pick of the Indian ponies, and a start was made to meet the enemy.

So well was this expedition carried out, that, after a good deal of feinting and maneuvering, the captain was enabled to charge home once more, scattering the Indians like chaff and this time pursuing them to their temporary camp, with the result that the Apaches, thoroughly cowed by the attacks of these horsemen, who fought altogether like one man, continued their flight, and the whole of the horses and cattle, with many Indian ponies as well, were taken and driven back in triumph to the corral by the rocks.

This encounter with the Indians proved most ef-

fectual, for the portion of the nation to which they belonged had never before encountered disciplined troops; and so stern was the lesson they received, that, though predatory parties were seen from time to time, it was quite a year before any other serious encounter took place.

In the meantime the governor had been so impressed with the value of the doctor's discovery that, without interfering in the slightest degree with his prospects, communications were at once opened with Lerisco, more people were invited to come out, smelting furnaces were erected, the silver purified, and in less than six months a regular traffic had been established across the plains, over which mules laden with the precious metal, escorted by troops, were constantly going and returning with stores for use in the mining town.

A town began to spring up rapidly, with warehouses and stores, for the mountain was no longer standing in solitary silence in the middle of the great plain. The hum of industry was ever to be heard; the picks of the miners were constantly at work; the great stamps that had been erected loudly pounded up the ore; and the nights that had been dark and lonely out there in the plains were now illuminated, and watched with wonder by the roving Apaches, when the great silver furnaces glowed and roared.

The growth of the place was marvelous, the canyon proving to be so rich in the finest kinds of silver, that the ore had but to be roughly torn out of the great rift that was first shown by the chief, and the profits were so enormous that Doctor Lascelles became as great a man in his way as the governor, while Bart, as his head officer and superintendent of the mine, had rule over quite a host.

Houses rose rapidly, many of them being of a most

substantial kind, and in addition, a large barrack was built for the accommodation of fifty men who worked as miners, but had certain privileges besides for forming the troop of well mounted lancers, whose duty it was to protect the mining town and the silver canyon from predatory bands of Apaches.

The lancers were raised and drilled by Captain Miguel, Bart being appointed their leader when he had grown to years of discretion—that is to say, of greater discretion than of old, and that was soon after Doctor Lascelles had said to him one day: “Well, yes, Bart, you have seemed to be like my son. I think it will be as well.” It may be guessed that the conversation related to Bart’s marriage with Maude.

But, in spite of his prosperity, and the constant demand for his services in connection with the mines and the increase of the town, Bart never forgot his delight in a ramble in the wilds; and whenever time allowed, and the Beaver and some of his followers had come in from some hunting expedition, there was just a hint to Joses, when before daybreak next morning a start was made either to hunt bison and pronghorn, the black tailed deer in the woods at the foot of the mountain, or to fish in some part of the canyon.

Unfortunately, though, the sparkling river became spoiled by degrees, owing to the enormous quantities of mine refuse that ran in, poisoning the fish and preventing them from coming anywhere near the mountain.

Still there were plenty to be had by those daring enough to risk an encounter with the Indians, and many were the excursions Bart enjoyed with Joses and the Beaver, both remaining his attached followers, though the latter used to look sadly at the change that had come over the land.

And truly it was a wondrous change. Some years later came the Mexican war, and the region passed under the control of the United States government. As years passed on the town grew enormously—works sprang up with towering chimneys and furnaces, the former ever belching out their smoke; while of such importance did Silver Canyon City grow, and so great was the traffic, that mules and wagons could no longer do the work.

The result is easy to guess. There was a vast range of rolling plain to cross, a few deviations enabling the engineer, who surveyed the country with Apaches watching him, to avoid the mountains; and this being done, and capital abundant, a railway crept, like a sinuous serpent, from Lerisco to the mountain foot, along which panted and raced the heavily laden trains.

The Apaches scouted, and there was some little trouble with them at first, but they were punished pretty severely, though they took no lesson so deeply to heart as the one read their chief upon seeing the first train run along the rails.

Poor wretch! he had not much more sense than a bison, for he galloped his little pony right on to the line, and pressed forward to meet the engine after firing his rifle—he rode no more.

“Well, I dare say it’s all right, Master Bart,” said Joses one day; “everybody’s getting rich and happy, and all the rest of it; but somehow, I like the good old times.”

“Why, Joses?” said Bart.

“Because, you see, Master Bart, we seem to be so horrid safe now.”

“Safe, Joses?”

“Yes; Master Bart,” grumbled the old fellow; “there ain’t no risks, no keeping watch o’ nights, no feeling as it aren’t likely that you’ll ever see an-

other morning, and it isn't exciting enough for me."

But then the Beaver came back with some news that made Joses's eyes sparkle.

"There's buffalo out on the far plain, captain," he said; "and I've seen sign of mountain sheep three days' journey up the canyon. Will the young chief Bart go?"

"That I will, Beaver," cried Bart. "Tomorrow at daybreak."

Then Black Boy would be saddled, for the sturdy little cob never seemed to grow old, except that there were a few gray hairs in his black coat; provisions were prepared, ammunition packed, good bys said, and for a few days Bart and his friends would be off into the wilderness, away from the bustle and toil always in progress now at the Silver Canyon.

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